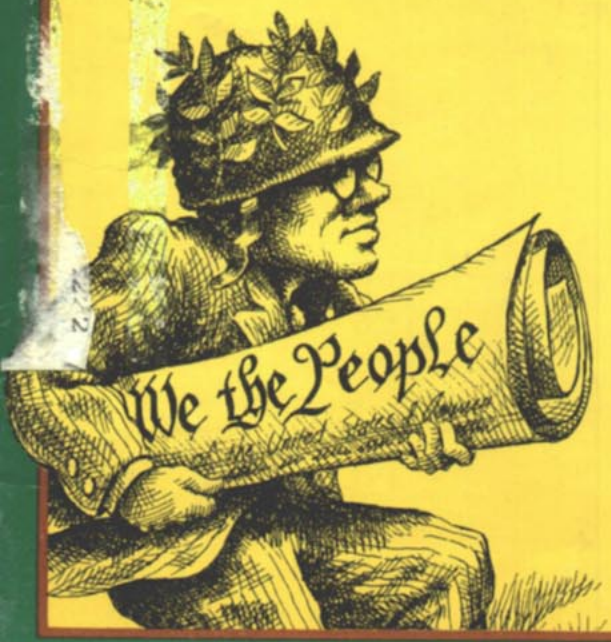
Edward N. Luttwak on
Overpopulation at the Pentagon

Jamie Beckett on
How I Negotiated Contracts for the Navy

The Washington Monthly

APRIL 1985 /$2.50

The Caucus-Happy Democrats



Exporting Idealism:

The Right Kind of Intervention.

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They made history. But a "spy for peace" helped make it possible.

Thomas Victor

The "spy's" name is Leon Charney. Former President Jimmy Carter calls him "one of the unsung heroes of the peace process. Very few people played as significant a role." But Charney has played *many* significant roles in his fascinating life: in the exodus of Soviet Jewry; in Israel, where he is particularly close to Ezer Weizman; in the U.S. Senate, where he was counsel to Senator Vance Hartke; in Earl Wilson's legal battle against Frank Sinatra; even in a Leningrad synagogue in 1973, where Charney, an accredited cantor, led Rosh Hashanah services.

This feisty, hard-driving lawyer and "spy for peace," as a leading Israeli newspaper calls him, for years has been where the action is. But nowhere were his special talents so necessary (or kept as secret) as they were before and during the Camp David negotiations.

Finally, Charney is able to divulge the secret story—and the "behind-the-scenes drama and shrewd appraisals of the character and interaction between the principals and supporting cast make absorbing reading."

—*Publishers Weekly*

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LETTERS

A market success

I write to call your attention to the misstatements of fact concerning Rogers & Wells in the recent article by Paul Glastris entitled "The Government Debt Racket" [February].

First, the author's statement that "the firm's almost total lack of experience rendered New York [City] bonds unmarketable" is false and defamatory. The fact is that as a result of New York City's severe fiscal crisis the public debt market had been closed to the City since March 1975, one full year before Rogers & Wells was retained as bond counsel. *See* Securities and Exchange Commission Staff Report on Transactions in Securities of the City of New York, August 26, 1977, Introduction and Summary, at pp. 1-3 ("SEC Report"). At the time it lost access to the public market, the City was represented by three bond counsel firms with long experience (SEC Report, Volume VI, at p. 2). Even though one of these firms was hired as bond counsel in an attempt by the City to return to the public credit market in 1977, the proposed sale was *not* successfully concluded.

Second, the suggestion that the City was not able to return to the public credit market with Rogers & Wells as its counsel is also false. The fact is that Rogers & Wells, as the City's bond counsel, rendered the sole legal opinion upon the City's successful return to the public market with the issuance in January 1979 of $125 million of Revenue Anticipation Notes, and in April 1981 with the issuance of $75 million of Serial Bonds. The Corporation Counsel wrote at the time that "the City is pleased with the services rendered by Rogers & Wells and is confident that the work done by that firm has been of great value to us in our efforts to reestablish full marketing access." To date, Rogers & Wells remains the sole bond counsel for the City of New York and has rendered legal opinions on the City's bonds and notes in excess of $12 billion.

The firm was originally retained by the City's Board of Estimate upon the joint recommendation of then-Mayor Beame and Comptroller Goldin, a process that was reaffirmed under the Koch administration.

Third, the claim that our firm "overcharge[d] the City by several hundred thousands of dollars" is also erroneous. Our firm voluntarily reduced our time charges for the City's 1979 fiscal year from $934,500 to $750,000 because of the extraordinary time required to negotiate all aspects of the City's four-year federally guaranteed financing and our desire to cooperate in the City's efforts to restore its financial health.

ROGER A. CLARK
Rogers & Wells

The author replies:

The statements complained of were based on two articles in a respected legal publication, *The American Lawyer*, and on interviews with city officials and members of the municipal bond bar. Subsequent investigation convinced me that I misinterpreted both what I read and what I was told. I therefore retract the offending statements and apologize for them.

Great Scots!

We regret we must point out evidence of your insensitivity to the feelings of the people of Welsh descent everywhere, here and abroad. In the article titled "The Government Debt Racket" by Paul Glastris (February), we read this: "If the state welshed just once on these moral obligation bonds, it would lose its standing in the credit markets for a very long time."

DENZIL WALTERS
Seattle, Washington

Denzil Walters is president of The Welsh Anti-Defamation League.

Culture Club

I'm afraid I must take issue with "How Psychology Sanctions the Cult of the Self" [Michael and Lise Wallach] in your February edition. To assert that psychology sanctions the self and thereby propagates the self as a cult which is harming American society is deeply misleading. It is not psychology but rather modern consumeristic capitalism which fosters the increasing individuation of America. This process has been going on for centuries and the present proponents of unbridled capitalism such as President Reagan and his horde have done far more to propagate the concept of Self above Society than Freud, Maslow, or Rogers.

I agree that preoccupation with the self is a danger for any society. But instead of attacking bystanders and symptoms, let us grapple with the disease itself: the power of capitalism to break apart society into struggling "selfs" and especially the current administration's attempts to restore this disease to epidemic levels.

TODD BEAMISH
Johnson City, Tennessee

There is a way of clarifying the perplexities of apparently conflicting facts and psychological theories Michael Wallach and Lise Wallach so ably sketch in their critique of the "psychology. . . [of] the Cult of the Self." And also, of accounting for altruism itself.

Two kinds of "selfishness" can be distinguished: single selfishness (Selfish) and double selfishness (Selfish-selfish). "Selfish" behavior may be and often is behavior for sake of perceived good for others or ideal good toward which the self aspires. In contrast, "selfish-selfish" behavior is that where the goal is exploitation, manipulation, power over, even pleasure in cruelty toward other selves.

The altruist takes pleasure in (here is single "selfishness") even sacrificing the self for others, saving a drowning daughter even at cost of the father's

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life. The selfish-selfish person takes pleasure in grabbing a floating piece of wood to save the self even at the cost of a daughter's life.

From what comes altruism? From what I call "emotional resonance"; the human faculty of empathetically resonating in emotional harmony with the hurting of other persons. Not to be able to feel such emotional resonance is a symptom of the constitutional sociopathic personality; he/she acts with no capacity for feeling how the results of such action will feel for the sufferer/victim. Norman Thomas long ago in his autobiography remarked that if humans universally had to feel how other humans feel, there would be no war!

If I see my wife get badly burned, I literally feel a cold tingle of pain—and, so would you in like circumstances. Hence "fellow feeling," and hence altruism.

C. L. HUBBELL
Chicago, Illinois

I believe that Wallach and Wallach were carried away by a valuable idea. To show that psychologists' views of human nature sanction selfishness they reduce some complex views to fit this idea and ignore recent developments. Although earlier psychological theory focused on human problems, on the self, on aggression, even some of these theories (which the authors discussed) had interest in love and caring for others. Moreover, starting about 20 years ago, theory and research on people benefiting other people, on altruism, has appeared, and has blossomed since.

The article notes the emphasis of Carl Rogers, a highly influential psychologist, on living life in a satisfying and self-expressive way, but not his view that accepting and loving oneself, which is necessary for a satisfying life, is intimately tied to accepting and loving other people. They note the view of one team of researchers who consider helping others in an emergency as a "selfish desire to rid oneself of an unpleasant emotion." They do not report that this is a minority view, not shared by most researchers who are trying to understand the altruistic bases of helping behavior.

The article refers to a very minor portion of my book, *Positive Social Behavior and Morality* (volume 1) and quotes me writing that "when we give unconditionally without any returns, what we give loses its value." I do suggest that in ongoing relationships, when one partner gives much and expects and gets nothing in return, he or she will often be taken for granted. While I suggest that it is a good idea to insist on some fairness and justice in ongoing relationships, most of the book stresses the importance of caring and consideration for other people, of helping and altruism, for positive human relations, for individual satisfaction, and for harmony within groups. My research and the theory described in the book (volume 1) stress the importance of "prosocial orientation." This has three components: a positive evaluation of human beings; concern about others' welfare; and a feeling of personal responsibility for others' welfare. As we would expect, people who possess such a value orientation help others more, whether the need arises from physical or psychological distress. A second volume with the same title explores how the motivation and the behavior to benefit other people evolve.

Currently there are many other psychologists with concerns and orientations similar to mine. Although there has been a tendency in psychological theory to focus on concerns of the self, it is not unreasonable to claim that psychology is going through a transformation, with much attention to altruism, cooperation, the interconnectedness among human beings.

ERVIN STAUB
Amherst, Massachusetts

Ervin Staub teaches psychology at the University of Massachusetts.

Thank you for printing the Wallachs' article on modern psychology. I find their strictures well taken. There is, however, one conclusive argument that they failed to state, one that may be applied to all the social sciences as well. Modern psychology, sociology, economics, and related disciplines follow humanist leads that have become conceptually corrupted through neglect of half of the humanist tradition.

Humanism derives from a millenium of thought by many of the best free minds of western civilization. But it is not an unbroken stream; it divides into the largely contrary intellections of Epicureanism (hedonism) and stoicism. The first line of thought is the basis of modern social science; the second, despite its attraction for leaders of the Enlightenment (Spinoza, Locke, Kant), has fallen into disuse: the categorical imperative, the theme of *Faust* (Part II), the statements by Pope and Donne, Arnold's insistence on "sweetness and light" are now disregarded and discarded. Why?

The apparent reason is the effect of the recent conflict between science and religion. Our moderns' avoidance of even the appearance of accepting religious insights as valid has blinded them to the possibility that the central thesis of the Old Testament and New, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," may be a fundamental imperative for any continuously workable society, even without invocation of enforcement by an Almighty. In a fit of childish pique, it seems, the moderns have abandoned the field to the fundamentalists.

For this, I blame the entire academic community. Had higher education insisted on knowledge and understanding of the classics, even if only in translation, this state of affairs could never have occurred. Now, neither academic nor fundamentalist appears to grasp what humanism really consists of. Should either contender for the minds of men emerge wholly victorious, the result could be disaster for our society.

MURRAY S. DAVIS JR.
Benicia, California

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How about Hawaii?

My compliments to you and to Philip Longman for his article "The Fall of the Idea of Thrift" (January); it is excellent. Point by point analysis may show weakness or bias, but the overview of his presentation, showing the interdependence of national and individual economic policies and culture change provokes much thought (and maybe there's a place closer to home than Samoa for the anthropologists!). This is the sort of article that makes me look forward to your monthly, expecting always to find something to agree with and something with which to disagree. Thank you.

REV. MICHAEL J. O'HARA
Killingworth, Connecticut

Legal make-up

Your "Tilting at Windmills" column in the February issue (page 7) correctly reported the absurd side of the dismal record of the D.C. Board of Cosmetology. But you failed to give credit where credit is due.

The findings you report were contained in a report of a committee of the D.C. Bar, Division 2, Committee on Consumer Affairs. The four attorneys who conducted the study—Anita Johnson, Carol Cowgill, Barry Cutler, and Ellen Broadman—did so on their own time, as a *pro bono publico* activity, where that term is particularly apt. Molly Sinclair of the *Post*, an excellent consumer affairs journalist, did cover the story, but the actual investigating was done by the lawyers on the D.C. Bar Committee.

Your criticism of the legal profession (among others) is well-founded and usually right on target. But this is in an instance where lawyers deserve credit for work well done. Indeed, the Consumer Affairs Committee, of which Professor David Koplow of Georgetown University is chairman, and of which I am an occasional participant, has a long record of public interest activities.

RON M. LANDSMAN
Washington, D.C.

O.K., O.K., we apologize

HEY! WHERE'S THE PUZZLE? Looks to me like you went and sold so much advertising that there was no room for an unprofitable puzzle, so it got the old heave-ho. And not so much as a hint of an explanation. Pretty shabby.

HENRY CARR
Palos Verdes Peninsula, California

Just received the February issue. Entrepreneurship, steel, and California politics are all well and good, but where's the puzzle?

LINDA K. MUNDEL
Los Angeles, California

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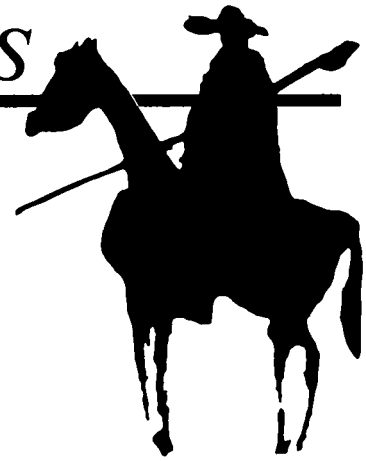
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



Last month a conservative publication called *The American Spectator* asked me to contribute to a symposium on what ails liberalism. I began by saying "liberals have fallen victim to the politics of selfishness." Then my blood began to boil at the thought of the audience I was addressing, and I added, "to which American conservatism succumbed long ago."

I think it's time for liberals to mount a great counter-attack on the conservatives. The self-criticism we've been engaging in should continue, but it shouldn't keep us from pointing out the sins of the opposition.

The moral problem of American conservatives is that they're evaders—they want to get out of doing their duty, whether it's military service or paying taxes. Their solution to the problem of national defense is to bribe the poor to serve in their stead. On taxation, their concern is to reduce their own burden. Their passion is protection of privilege. They live in lily-white enclaves. Keep out the Blacks. Keep out the Jews. And keep out the Hispanics— except when they use the servants' entrance.

The George Wills want to put a Burkean veneer on American conservatism and pretend that there are a lot of Henry Stimsons out there on active service in peace and war—men who are profoundly moral and socially responsible even though skeptical about the wisdom of the masses. The truth is that there have been only a handful of such people on the American right. The country club bigot whose enthusiasm for tax shelters is exceeded only by his contempt for welfare mothers is much more typical of the dominant group in the Republican party today. . . .

The administration believes that Jeane Kirkpatrick increased support for the United States in the United Nations General Assembly. The facts indicate otherwise. In 1984, according to *The New York Times*, the United States voted with the majority of UN members 14 percent of the time compared with 21 percent of the time in 1983. How did the State Department react to these inconvenient numbers?

"We frankly were surprised. When you have one impression and the figures come out entirely differently, you have to ask if

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you were wrong or if the figures were misleading. We concluded the figures were misleading and that even though the numbers were down, it's quite fair to say we've done better this year."...

A similarly persuasive explanation was provided by a lawyer for Resorts International in the Bahamas who was accused of having made a pay-off to the Bahamian prime minister on behalf of the hotel and casino chain. The situation was a bit sticky because the accusation was based on the lawyer's own testimony. But what really happened, the lawyer explained, is that the prime minister had asked him for a loan. Naturally the lawyer got the money for the loan by asking Resorts International to give him an advance of $120,000 for legal work....

John Fedders, the former head of the Division of Enforcement of the Securities and Exchange Commission may be different from most lawyers in his tendency toward wifebeating, but he is painfully like far too many of them in his motivation for public service. Asked why he was working at the SEC, he answered that the experience he gained there would enable him to return to private practice as a "doyen" of the securities bar "with an income of $400,000 a year."

Why so much money? A recent issue of *Washingtonian* magazine explains:

"This is a status-conscious town in which creating a good impression and the right connections can make all the difference in a career...a premium is placed on living in the right neighborhood, driving the right car, sending the kids to the right schools, taking the right vacations...." For a family of four, *Washingtonian* estimates that this life costs $207,255 a year. Here are some of the expenses: $39,240 a year in payments on $375,000 home in Wesley Heights, $12,000 in tuition for two children at St. Albans and Sidwell Friends, another $12,000 for a live-in nanny and housekeeper, $8,000 for vacations at Aspen and Martha's Vineyard, and $9,600 for payments on a $26,000 BMW and a $16,000 Volvo wagon.

The question is, does one have to have any of those things, and the answer is of course not. For example, Andy Jacobs, a congressman from Indiana accepts only $49,000 of his $74,891.63 congressional salary. The people who think they must have their BMWs are made very uncomfortable by people like Jacobs. But the truth is one can live quite nicely in Washington on $49,000 a year. That's why I hope congressmen and other top officials will at least share, if not exceed, the 5 percent pay cut the administration is asking civil servants to accept.

Congressmen from districts where real estate costs are especially high do need some kind of housing allowance to help cover the costs of maintaining residences both back home and in Washington. But aside from them, I think the only other top officials who have a legitimate excuse for needing more money are those with offspring in college. But the answer to that problem is, as *The Washington Monthly* has proposed, having higher education financed by loans to students repayable over 30 years or so through an additional assessment on their income tax. And remember, that plan has the additional benefit of making the student take his education more seriously because he knows he'll ultimately have to pay for it himself....

The Internal Revenue Service has 2,400 employees who are supposed to give you tax advice if you give them a call. Why bother with H&R Block when you can get the inside skinny from the IRS itself? *The Wall Street Journal*'s Karen Slater decided to pursue the answer to that question by calling IRS offices around the country and asking their advice on four questions ranging from simple to complex. The results:

"No question commanded correct answers from all five IRS offices, to which it was directed. On two questions, four out of five responses were correct. On the other two, totally or partially wrong answers outnumbered the correct ones by about the same ratio."...

A recent article about Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson Goode says that among his efforts to remove obstacles to economic growth is "a change from taxes on gross receipts to a profit-

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based plan." I wish more public officials had had Mayor Goode's understanding of business reality. An example of a lack of such understanding has been the recent national policy of lowering income taxes while raising Social Security taxes. This is disastrous for struggling enterprises. When a tax is based on profit, as in the case of the corporate income tax, they have little or none to pay. But when it must be paid regardless of profit, as in the case of Social Security tax, it can be fatal....

Have you heard about the Ponting case? It concerns a British civil servant named Clive Ponting who was charged with passing to a member of Parliament documents about the sinking of the Argentine cruiser, *General Belgrano*. He was indicted and brought to trial by the Thatcher government, which has been embarrassed because the documents showed that it had lied to Parliament about the sinking. The theory of the case was that civil servants are servants of the executive, not of the legislative body. This is, of course, outrageous. Both the legislative and the executive branches are servants of the British people. The peoples' interest is to have each branch deal truthfully with the other. Unfortunately, this is understood little better here than it is in England. Administration witnesses do not hesitate to bend or conceal the truth on the Hill. Incredibly enough, they often perceive such behavior as the path of honor. That is why we need a law requiring all executive branch testimony to be under oath....

If you have heard that the number of doctorates in science and engineering has risen steadily since 1979, you might have concluded that our technological future couldn't be rosier. Well, *Science* magazine has bad news for you. It's not Americans who are getting all those degrees. An increasing proportion are going to foreigners who come here to study but who will take their knowledge back home. In 1983, American universities awarded more doctoral degrees in engineering to non-U.S. citizens than to U.S. citizens....

Another troubling item in the news about science, at least insofar as legislation might play a role in determining our technological future, came from a special school the scientific community held for newly elected members of Congress in January. Among the teachers were such scientific luminaries as Lewis Thomas, Leon Lederman, Maxine Singer, and Joshua Lederberg. But, according to *The Washington Post*, only six of the 43 new congressmen showed up for even part of the two-day session....

"Hitting It Big & Kissin' It Goodbye" was the headline and "No Kids, No Job: Women at Home Just for Themselves," the subhead over a recent article by Stephanie Mansfield in *The Washington Post*. It told what seemed at first to be a heartening story about women who were fed up with "wasted years, trying to imitate men," or women who were leaving prestigious law firms. "Every woman lawyer I know hates it," said one.

But what has this revolution led to? It appears that we're going back to the worst of the fifties woman, only without the three kids in the station wagon. For example, one woman is using her new freedom this way:

"She leaves her Alexandria townhouse every morning at 7:30 to drive to Warrenton to play tennis, gets back at noon and cleans the house, goes to the grocery, takes long walks, and reads. She also has the freedom to accompany her husband on business trips."

How about using some of that time to care for lonely old people or to do public-interest lobbying or any of the thousands of other things that need doing and that there isn't enough money to pay people to do?

I'm always delighted when I see women—or men—who can afford to free themselves from thinking they have to have the same kind of high-paying jobs that everyone else seeks. There's nothing wrong with using some of that time for fun. But some of it should be used to help the helpless and the afflicted and to serve the community....

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Last year's Deficit Reduction Act asked federal agencies to cut $3 billion from their budgetary allotments for public affairs, advertising, audio-visual products, publications, consultants, motor vehicle purchases, and travel. These expenses are, it should be remembered, those of executive department agencies under the control of the great budget-cutter himself. How much of the requested cuts has Reagan gotten his own agencies to make? Exactly 8.2 percent....

David Stockman is right in wanting to abolish the Small Business Administration, and the congressmen who are opposing him, like Senator Lowell Weicker and Max Baucus, are displaying their ignorance of the executive branch, where the SBA has long been infamous for the inferiority of both its personnel and its programs. Too many congressmen and too many reporters are seduced by their belief that the government should help small business into thinking that the SBA actually renders such assistance. In fact it seldom does....

Senator Alan Dixon, who is a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, had read the reports questioning the effectiveness of the Divad Field Gun (see "Why Divad Wouldn't Die," Gregg Easterbrook, November 1984) and decided to test the gun himself. He flew to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he was placed in a tank that carried two 40mm Divad barrels. He sighted the gun and squeezed the trigger. The result, as described by *The Washington Post*'s George C. Wilson:

"One of the Divad barrels jammed and was not to fire again during Dixon's visit to the firing range."

Around the same time that Dixon was trying to fire the Divad, public relations officers were assembling a group of reporters in Nashville, Tennessee to watch a demonstration of the Apache, which the Army describes as "the free world's most advanced adverse weather helicopter." The reporters' necks began to ache as they fruitlessly scanned the skies for the Apache. Finally they were told that it couldn't fly because, according to the *Tennessean*, "its transmission was frozen."

Episodes like these led *The New York Times* recently to run a story about military contractors on the first page of its Sunday Business section. It was called "Bungling the Military Buildup" and concluded that "four years of Pentagon nurturing and Reagan administration budgetry largess" has produced "a dizzying procession of highly publicized cost and quality fiascos."

Is there no shame in the Pentagon?...

One reason for the companies' indifference to quality may be that their major stockholders don't care either. A survey of institutional investors, reported by Skip Wallenberg of the Associated Press, found that of the 12 factors mentioned by Wall Street's heavy hitters in determining their choice of stocks, product quality ranked dead last....

Another factor in corporate incompetence is the growing tendency to reward managers without regard to performance. "While the net income of companies making up the Fortune '500' list would have been low in 1983 had it not been for the extraordinary earnings of the automobile industry," writes Arch Patton in the *Harvard Business Review*, "directors of the 100 largest *increased* the salaries and cash benefits of their chief executive officers by an average of 13.7 percent"—32 actually paid their CEOs more than $1 million each, but these same directors displayed their devotion to fair play by giving their workers only a 5.9 percent raise. "In the last decade alone," writes Patton, "the percentage of the increase in the average chief executive's spendable income probably doubles that of foremen and hourly workers."...

When the Korean War began in 1950, American troops were outfitted in winter clothing that was bulky and offered little protection against harsh cold. Even during the heavy fighting with the Chinese around the Chosin Reservoir,

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more Americans were killed by cold than by guns. Now, 35 years later, Craig Medred of the *Anchorage Daily News* reports:

"There is no reason to believe U.S. troops are any better outfitted for a winter war today. Despite advances in manmade fabrics that have revolutionized winter wear for civilians, the Army has remained dressed in the heavy wool and inefficient cotton ensemble of Korea. Soldiers can dress for action and freeze, or dress warmly and look, feel, and move like the Pillsbury doughboy."...

I want to congratulate the *Boston Globe* for its editorial insight into a tax break the respectable press seldom criticizes:

"Nonprofit institutions that have played the tax schedules heavily in their fundraising efforts also threaten the broad objectives of tax simplification. Their quiet but effective influence will be hard to resist without Reagan's forceful advocacy of change. He could be singularly effective in pointing out that the Harvards and Yales of the world should have deeper calls on alumni loyalty and support than through the pages of Form 1040."

It might be added that our glossier institutions tend to be supported by wealthy people for whom the charitable deduction saves 50 cents in taxes for each dollar contributed, while working-class contributors to a parish church get radically less from the deduction, if they can deduct at all....

If on the evening of February 8 you happened to catch the network news and saw the shocking way in which the Americans accompanying Kim Dae Jung, the Korean dissident leader, were shoved and pushed around by Korean police, you must have been bewildered by the stories in the following day's paper that treated the incident as one about which there was some doubt. "Americans *Say* They Were Roughed Up" (emphasis supplied) was a typical head. Apparently what happened is that the reporters relied on an embassy briefing for their stories, not realizing that in the great tradition of the foreign service, the embassy suffered from clientitis, a tendency to sympathize more with the Korean government than with their troublesome visitors....

With their new embassy in Washington, the French abandon whatever claim to leadership in taste they may have had. It looks as if the architect of the Rayburn building had been asked to design the Fuhrerbunker. Incidentally, it has its own theater, with 285 seats. Why should an embassy have its own theater?...

While I admire Stockman's stands on military pensions and the SBA, I think he is heartless in his attitude toward the farmers. Sure, some of them took out loans that don't look so good today. But they really didn't look all that bad a few years ago. In fact some of them were incurred to boost production to meet what at least some officials said would be increased demand for exports. But the point is not whether the loans represented the ultimate in fiscal prudence or not, it's that a lot of farmers are in trouble today and that as a group they deserve our help. There may be some who borrowed so recklessly that they deserve to fail. And there may be some who for various reasons don't really need government help. But most farmers are good people, the kind of people society should want to help when they're in trouble.

Remember there is nothing wrong with a society deciding through its elected representatives that certain institutions are worth preserving even though they may require a subsidy. Amtrak is an example. The family farm is an even more important one....

Speaking of higher education, *The New York Times* reports a disturbing trend away from need-blind admission and toward offering extra aid as an inducement to the best students.

It used to be that winning a scholarship meant that a poor boy or girl could go to college. It has come to mean only that a smart kid has proved that he is bright. He can come from a rich family, but he will seize the

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scholarship money from the hands of the impoverished because of the recognition it represents....

Speaking of the IRS, a friend who is a tax attorney writes that those members of the Kentucky and Tennessee bars who think they're going to get away with deducting their jaunts to Austria may be in for a shock. He points out that a key criterion for deductibility under Section 274 (h) of the Internal Revenue Code is that "it is as reasonable for the meeting to be held outside the North American area as within it." The true answer to this may be that it is "as reasonable" since the only reasons for the meeting are pleasure and tax deductibility, which the members would be seeking, wherever they went. But what about it, IRS? Won't some brave soul over there finally do something about these junkets the rest of us pay for and that people like the Kentucky and Tennessee lawyers seem to almost contemptuously assume will be allowed by the authorities?...

Last year, against the bitter opposition of the local medical establishment, the District of Columbia city council enacted a law permitting midwives to deliver babies in local hospitals. But our physicians, never so determined as when their fees are threatened, have come up with a new tactic. They have persuaded Washington Hospital Center to require that a doctor be present whenever a midwife delivers a baby. Since midwives have proved that they can handle 90 percent of births alone, this requirement is outrageous. It might make sense in the small number of cases when complications are likely. There also might be a reasonable argument for having a doctor on call nearby, but there is simply no justification other than income protection for having the physician present at every birth....

Edward Pritchard died just before Christmas. Veteran readers may recall the memorable article Frank Browning wrote about him in these pages in 1973. Pritchard was, many thought, the brightest of the bright young men of the New Deal. But shortly after he returned to his native Kentucky in the late forties to go into politics, his career was blighted by a prison sentence for stuffing a ballot box. I'm indebted to Arthur Schlesinger for reminding me of my favorite story about him. "Prich," as he was called by his friends, was campaigning against A. B. (Happy) Chandler, who proceeded to denounce him as an ex-con. Prich replied:

"It is true that I once was an inmate at the federal penitentiary. I lived with rapists, murderers, thieves, and embezzlers. But I tell you, my friends, that every one of them was the moral superior of A. B. Chandler."

—*Charles Peters*

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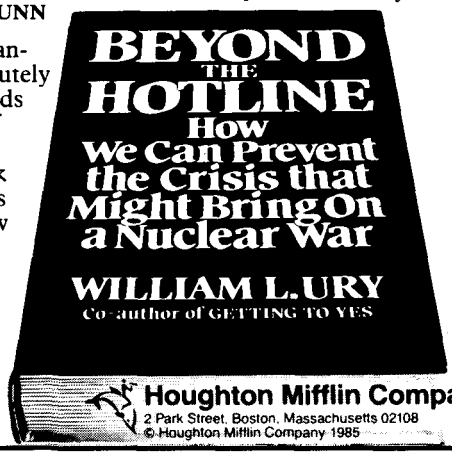

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Exporting Idealism: The Right Kind of Intervention

By Harden Smith

"Meddling in the internal affairs of other countries." American foreign policymakers usually take pains to deny such intentions. Yet the economic assistance we provide, the development projects we sponsor, and, above all, the military aid we give to Third World countries are anything but neutral. These programs inevitably affect the internal dynamics of a country, propping up the existing government or setting in motion political changes that may eventually undermine it. The real question is not whether we are interfering in the political life of the Third World. Rather, it's whether our intervention is effective.

Vietnam, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Iran, El Salvador, Lebanon—the list of countries that have given us grief despite American aid is a long one. Our ostensible purpose in providing aid to these countries has been twofold: to contain the spread of Soviet influences and to promote democracy by encouraging such democratic institutions as a free press, fair elections, trade unions, and representative assemblies. We spend billions, sacrifice both international prestige and countless American lives—and often end up with little to show for it.

Why do we keep failing? While second-guessing is easy, I think a major reason is our failure to do *enough* meddling in these countries' internal affairs. Or, more precisely, we restrict our intervention to economic and social programs, hoping that well-fed people will not turn to the Soviets and that grassroots social programs will build responsive political institutions at the national level.

Economic aid obviously can be helpful, and not only in feeding malnourished villagers or building a new school or hospital. The economic and social assistance undertaken by John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress in Latin America, for example, helped solidify the democratic institutions of Costa Rica. But when such efforts go unaccompanied by the right kind of political action, they can produce results contrary to what we seek. Ethiopia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Libya all have received extensive economic assistance; but because we did not work as hard to strengthen the political institutions in these countries, the results have tended to be negligible at best and sometimes even destructive.

To be sure, some of the problems come with the territory. Economic aid can produce rising expectations among a populace that the nations in question cannot meet. (See "Great Expectations: The Real Cause of Revolution," October 1983.) But we make matters worse when we neglect a developing country's need for institutions that

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can give it a chance to resolve these conflicts and that will ensure that the benefits of our economic and social aid are widely shared. Instead, all too often, our aid strengthens dictators who stand in the way of democratic reform. Witness, among countless other examples, the repressive policies of a President Mobutu of Zaire or a Marcos of the Philippines. In much of the Third World "in place of the Speaker with a wig, there stands a soldier with a gun," as Dennis Austin sadly comments on Britain's ex-colonies in Africa. Our major concern seems to be whether that soldier is on our side.

These days "political action" is a dirty word, suggesting such massive and inept interventions as the Bay of Pigs, the campaign to overthrow Salvador Allende in Chile, and the recent mining of Nicaragua's ports. But political action doesn't have to be this sinister. It can, and should, be a series of small initiatives taken over a long period of time by various arms of the United States government for the purpose of increasing the odds that massive intervention won't be needed later. After all, isn't it better to risk some embarrassment now with our ostensible allies, than to grapple later with the choices that currently confront us in countries such as El Salvador?

There's nothing fancy about this kind of "political action." Just one example: Why wasn't Benigno Aquino of the Philippines invited to the White House before his fateful return to his home country? Such an invitation would have communicated an important message to Ferdinand Marcos: that we sympathize with noncommunist reformers who sincerely desire to promote democratic institutions in that troubled country. Why didn't we let the dictator and his cronies

Whose Revolution

On the homefront, President Reagan's mission has been to shape the way Americans see his escalating war in Nicaragua.

The way the president tells it, the armed opponents of Nicaragua's Sandinista government (the "Contras") are freedom fighters in the mold of George Washington and Patrick Henry—the "moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers," he has called them. Their worthy struggle will surely triumph if only we supply them with the weapons they need. They have the men. They have the heart. They have the tacit consent of an enslaved people. All they need is the guns.

Reports from Nicaragua tell a different story. We are providing not only guns, but fighting forces as well. The conflict in Nicaragua is becoming an American one.

What happened is that by mid-1983, the CIA had lost faith in the Contras' ability to win. A National Intelligence Estimate, dated June 30, said that the Contras would be hard pressed to hold a large population center, let alone overthrow the Sandinista government.

So the CIA hired mercenaries from other Latin American countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia. These mercenaries, acting under American supervision and with American participation, began to take on important missions like blowing up fuel tanks and mining harbors. A classified CIA document detailed 19 such raids in early 1984 alone in which Americans were involved directly along with what the CIA calls our "UCLA"—"unilaterally controlled Latin assets."

During these raids, American helicopter pilots fired directly on Sandinista positions, giving air cover for commando raids, while U.S. planes with sophisticated radar provided support for nighttime attacks. In radio broadcasts, the Contras took credit for successful raids. But in fact they were the work of ourselves and the mercenaries we hired. "There were some operations we didn't even know about," recalls Edgar Chammaro, a former Contra leader.

These accounts do not come from hysterical left-wing journals. They are the work of respected reporters with *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times*. When *The Washington Monthly* asked Elliot Abrams, the Reagan administration's assistant secretary of state for human rights, about the *Times* and *Journal* articles, he denied that they were true. But, he added, "as a hypothetical matter," would we object to hiring a mercenary who was expert in some arcane branch of warfare to help the Afghan rebels?

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know that there would be a price to pay if Aquino came to harm? Marcos would have been upset, but it's doubtful he would have done anything more than protest. He needs us more than we need him, despite our military bases in the Philippines. Indeed, distancing ourselves from Marcos in such a fashion would have enhanced our ability, in the long run, to keep those bases. To prevent a communist takeover in the Philippines—a possibility that grows each day—we need credibility among Marcos's noncommunist opponents. If they see us solely as obstacles to progress, not only will they write us off as hypocrites; more, they may join with the communists out of desperation—and retaliate against us if they ever assume power.

The United States must stop being defensive, overlooking a regime's authoritarian behavior until a crisis occurs and then invoking the specter of incipient communism. Put another way, as Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge did a quarter-century ago, our foreign policy should promote the Declaration of Independence instead of being constantly on the defensive against the precepts of Karl Marx.

Rice Riot

Having served with the State Department for some years in three countries (Libya, Liberia, and Somalia) where coups have destroyed embryonic democracies, I am left with a very strong sense that we missed our opportunities. Perhaps we would have lost anyway, but our chances would have been much better had we aggressively and directly intervened to assist the democratic process.

Recent events in Liberia are an apt example.

Is This, Anyway?

The answer, of course, is that we are not hiring just one expert to help the Contras. We are hiring a paramilitary force to do their work for them. Ronald Reagan has compared our role in Nicaragua to that of the French under General Lafayette during the American Revolution. But isn't it more accurate to say that we are hiring the Hessians? Furthermore, in Afghanistan, the rebels are fighting a foreign army occupying their country, just as we did during our own revolution. In Nicaragua, by contrast, it is we who are supplying the foreign forces seeking to overthrow an indigenous government.

Another series of articles, by Frank Greve and Ellen Warren of the Knight-Ridder chain, casts question on the administration claim that no Americans have lost their lives in this conflict. Their account suggests strongly that U.S. servicemen have died flying helicopter missions over both Nicaragua and El Salvador.

The alleged fatalities have occurred in the 100th Task Force of the Army's 101st Airborne, created after the failed Iranian hostage mission to ferry elite commando units into combat. In 1983 the 100th suffered 17 deaths, one-half the total for the entire Army. Army officials maintain that these deaths occurred in training. But from accounts of next of kin, combined with other sources, Greve pieced together the story of the kind of covert operation a Gordon Liddy might daydream about on slow days in Langley.

Dressed in civilian clothes and outfitted with high-tech goggles for seeing at night, the U.S. airmen flew Contras deep into Nicaraguan territory. If downed, they were instructed to blow up their helicopters. They packed weapons of their own choosing—knives, Colt .45s and Uzi machine guns were the favorites. They were told to expect no help from the U.S. government that sent them there—but did receive thousands of dollars in cash for bribing their way out of the country and a credit card for airfare home.

While the administration and the Pentagon are still denying Greve's account of helicopter crashes, there is no denying that the CIA's "covert" operation is floundering. Originally the administration saw the Contra war as a way of—surprise!—halting a Soviet takeover of the region. Now things are looking less clear cut. "We're in a bog with no easy way out," one State Department official told the *Los Angeles Times*. "Over here you have snakes. Over there alligators; over here pirannhas. Which way do you choose?"

—The editors

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One of the oldest nations in Africa—it was founded in 1847 by former American slaves—Liberia at first glance seems more like a success story than one of failure. It is not in the communist camp; in fact, following a brief flirtation with doctrinaire socialism under the military rule of President Samuel K. Doe, it recently has sought to shore up its traditionally friendly relations with the West.

Appearances, however, do not tell the story. Liberian society today is less open, its institutions less "democratic," than they were a generation ago. The government is dominated now by the military, which in turn is dominated by the Kranh, one of the country's 23 tribal groups. Liberia appears to be starting to succumb to the coup-counter-coup cycle that afflicts so many African nations. And in this regard, Liberia is typical: a decade from now we might well look back upon events in Liberia, as we have done with so many other countries, and wonder why our efforts came to naught. Like most of our foreign policy failures, it is not self-evident today, but rather is quietly in the making.

To understand America's missed opportunities in Liberia, some history is in order. The administrations of both William V. S. Tubman (1944-1971) and William Tolbert (1971-1980) represented primarily the interests of a minority oligarchy—the Americo-Liberian establishment that descended from the former slaves who created the country. During the Tubman administration, however, the *direction* of change was toward wider participation by all groups in government and in the economic life of the country. No one would accuse Tubman of being a front man for Common Cause. But he did set in motion a policy of "unification"—participation by all of the country's 23 tribal groups, not just the Americo-Liberians. Early in his administration, Tubman eliminated the dual administrative system that created "counties" along the coastline, where the Americos had settled, but consigned the upcountry areas inhabited by other tribal groups to the status of "territories." The heads of two of the country's four security organizations (Tubman believed in checks and balances) were members of indigenous tribes, not Americo-Liberians. Rather than intimidate potential dissidents Tubman coopted them, advancing many of the brightest into government after informants spotted them while still students. Tubman's under-secretary of state, for instance, had been identified as a student radical while studying in the United States.

Tolbert, who succeeded Tubman in 1971, reversed these trends. His brother Stephen, the country's finance minister, capitalized on the power he shared with Tolbert to increase vastly their personal wealth. After touring government lands that were in reserve for future expansion of Monrovia, Liberia's capital, President Tolbert appropriated the best land for himself, invoking a provision of a law intended for unsettled rural land. His brother channeled government purchases to his own companies and intimidated rivals into selling out to him at depressed prices.

With this corruption and the visible shift away from democratization of the political and economic life of Liberia, Tolbert's regime became increasingly vulnerable. When concession negotiations with iron and rubber companies failed to produce expected benefits for Liberia, the public presumed that the companies had bought the Tolberts off. When Tolbert revoked a subsidy on rice, Liberia's basic food, and its price soared, riots broke out in the capital. Tolbert mishandled the riots, and a military coup followed that brought Doe, a former military sergeant, to power.

Where did we go wrong in Liberia? In a multitude of small ways, largely sins of omission rather than commission. For instance, we could have insisted, even before the end of Tubman's administration, on a different focus for our economic assistance projects, directing more to tribal areas and less to Monrovia. The existing

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aid patterns merely increased the resentment of tribal groups that traditionally had been excluded. Instead of building the huge and understaffed W. V. S. Tubman Memorial Hospital in downtown Monrovia, as the government wanted, we could have insisted that our dollars be spent for smaller, upcountry hospitals and clinics supported by a mid-size hospital in Monrovia. This might have antagonized the government, but it would have shown Liberians that we were committed to the continued broadening of the popular base of government. Similarly, our assistance to Liberian schools was unwisely concentrated in Monrovia.

Secondly, our advisers assigned to the various ministries could have filled the watch-dog role that a free press serves in a developed democracy. They should have been instructed to report to the U.S. mission any official abuses they observed. American officials who advised the Liberian police knew, through the police grapevine, of brutal interrogation techniques, abuse of power by senior police, and foul detention facilities. American personnel tried to counter these trends through better training programs and by exerting pressure on police officials. Our embassy did not, however, systematically attempt to confront higher authorities in the Liberian government with evidence of these abuses, or exert pressure to put a stop to them.

Another omission was our failure to react when local politics interfered with programs we supported. For instance, we did nothing when a Peace Corps volunteer was transferred for trying to do his job. The volunteer had attempted to resolve priorities between two road building projects for which he was responsible by arranging a meeting between the leaders of two clans. This did not please the district commissioner, who had been playing one clan off against the other to protect his own base. The interior ministry transferred the volunteer to the other end of the country. Nobody on the Peace Corps staff or in the U.S. embassy protested.

We also should have monitored and countered influence-buying by major American companies investing in Liberia. American missions are not encouraged to report such behavior, even though these corporations are often obstacles to promoting open, democratic institutions. In Liberia, a major bank and a rubber company, among others, employed the law firm of the speaker of the house, each paying a monthly retainer of $2,000 for very little legal work. Even such relatively commonplace corruption can become fodder for anti-American factions within a country, and frustrate our efforts to nudge local officials in the right direction. A brave ambassador could have raised the problem locally with the companies, or sent such information to Washington and urged the State Department to raise the issue with the companies' home offices. But it was never done.

Foreign pay-offs won't stop until there is joint action among the major trading nations. But meanwhile we have to stop them when they give our country a black eye. Our foreign service officers are better situated than anyone to blow the whistle, if only they were not so reluctant to do so.

Even if Tubman and Tolbert had continued to halt the progress towards democracy, they could not have ignored *all* complaints by their principal supplier of assistance. Most important, by setting a pattern of discussing sensitive political issues with Tubman, we could have continued such discussions with Tolbert and his brother without implying a lack of confidence in them during their accession to power. But by the late 1960s, American dialogue with Tubman had verged on sterility, consisting largely of meetings on such subjects as next year's budget or an upcoming U.N. vote—not on how the U.S. could help expand his nation-building initiatives. If the discussion route failed, we still could have pressured Tolbert to clean up his act—by cutting aid, inspiring congressional inquiries, briefing journalists, and the like. In short, we should have

In Liberia, our embassy should have protested police brutality and influence-buying by U.S. corporations. It didn't. A military coup followed.

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Strangling Debtor Democracies

Foreign policy is not just the work of diplomats. Businessmen and bankers make foreign policy, too, and not always for the better.

In Latin America, while the Reagan administration continues its obsessions in El Salvador and Nicaragua, a far more important drama is unfolding further south: the debt crisis of major countries like Argentina and Brazil. Brazil's debt alone exploded from $37 billion in 1977 to $102 billion in 1984, and the interest payments on these loans are a staggering burden for its economy.

We are intervening in this crisis no less than in Central America. But we are not doing so through our foreign policy apparatus, seeking to foster the spread of democracy. Instead we've entrusted the job to private bankers who are putting these countries through financial wringers in order to protect their loans. This is a case study in how not to intervene.

This March, Brazil inaugurated its first civilian president in 21 years, joining Argentina, Ecuador, Uruguay, and Peru as the newest and largest democracy on the continent. There *is* a democratic resurgence in South America, for which the Reagan administration has repeatedly taken credit. You'd think the administration would take special pains to promote stability in these countries so they can continue down the democratic path. Not surprisingly, the countries' elected leaders have expected so as well.

They've been disappointed. Argentine President Raul Alfonsin has given up hope that Washington would pressure the banks and the International Monetary Fund to relent. He can hope now only that his fragile democratic consensus can survive the austerities these creditors are imposing upon him. Similarly, a close aide to Peru's President Fernando Belaunde Terry complained recently to Alan Riding of *The New York Times* that, on Terry's visit to Washington last fall, "President Reagan gave him only half an hour. He wasn't even offered a cup of tea."

Our president is not a close student of hemispheric affairs. "You'd be surprised," he exclaimed upon visiting South America, "they're all separate countries." But the deeper problem is that disruptions like the debt crisis just don't register on the radar screens with which official Washington—the White House in particular—views the world. Debt is not an East-West issue. There are no clandestine arms shipments from Cuba. Even Jeane Kirkpatrick would have trouble identifying a communist menace in Brazil.

In this way the debt crisis falls into the pattern of recent international crises, like the OPEC oil shocks, the Iranian revolution, and trade disputes with our allies. They just don't fit the script. Our geopoliticians paid little attention to OPEC in the late 1960s, when its members were publicly plotting their course: the Soviets weren't behind it, so let the oil industry worry about it. The administration sees the Latin debt crisis today in much the same manner. Let the bankers handle it. We have bigger fish to fry (Grenada, for example).

The Treasury has been involved in the debt negotiations, but primarily from a banking standpoint. The top echelons in foreign policy have played only a minor role. One State Department official responsible for monitoring international financial developments observed, "Washington D.C. as a place is extremely ignorant of banking per se. . . . Banking is viewed as very esoteric. The State Department doesn't really know what [bankers] do in terms of foreign policy

Gordon Rayfield writes on politics and economics from New York.

engaged in a lot more "political action."

But we allowed the situation to deterioriate because of our own cast of mind. On the one hand was the "liberal" impulse that deemed it inappropriate for Westerners to seek to guide the political development of a small, backward country. The conservative view was that it didn't really matter who ran Liberia, as long as the country remained in the "Western camp." (This view was epitomized by the foreign service officer who once told me we needed more "little black fascists" in Africa.) Others were passive because of their sense of the magnitude of the problem. Above all was the bureaucratic inertia of

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By Gordon Rayfield

implications. . . ."

Meanwhile, the bankers have been doing to the debtor democracies what Reagan says he wants to do to the Sandinistas—make them cry "uncle." Brazil, for example, is the world's ninth largest economy and its largest debtor. Half the population is under 25, and one million people enter the work force each year. Yet in return for "restructuring" (extending the payment schedule on) their loans, the bankers and the IMF have imposed harsh austerities that have thrown the country into a recession. There are fewer jobs, and the middle class—the bedrock of fledgling democracies—has been hit especially hard, with purchasing power shrinking by 14 percent a year.

The long-term prospects, moreover, are not bright. Most American banks have effectively redlined Latin America since 1982. As these countries pay off old loans, no new loans are flowing in. As a result, the debtor democracies have become net exporters of capital, especially to the U.S. Forty billion dollars flows out each year to the industrial countries. Instead of developing, these countries are stagnating.

We still have friends in South America, but their numbers are dwindling. We preach the IMF religion of higher taxes and balanced budgets, while we follow the opposite course ourselves (draining capital from their economies to finance our deficits). We preach free enterprise and democracy, then sit back while our bankers, through the International Monetary Fund, dictate policies on wages, prices, and other vital areas of economic life. How would *we* feel if our government told us that until further notice we would have to endure a recession to satisfy bankers in Switzerland and France? A Sandinista could look pretty good after "democracy" like that.

South Americans can't believe that the United States government would entrust private bankers to make foreign policy for the world's largest democracy. Diego Ascensio, the United States ambassador to Brazil, tells audiences how he must constantly convince Brazilians that there is no official in Washington who wakes up every morning trying to decide how the U.S. should screw Brazil that day.

There is a better way to intervene in debtor nations like Brazil. We should start by seeking to reverse the financial hemorrhage that is threatening their nascent democratic governments. This, in turn, means restoring a reasonable level of private bank lending. It's not enough to enable these countries to pay off old loans; they need sufficient capital to enable their economies to expand.

Having helped create the debt crisis with their profligate loan practices, U.S. banks should not be permitted to wash their hands and walk away. The federal government should encourage the banks to free up these funds, using its regulatory authority if necessary. With new loans, however, should come new strings; not the recessionary strings the bankers have imposed, but requirements that debtor nations promote democratic institutions and practices. This would give pause to any generals who might be thinking of a comeback once the civilians clean up their mess. This kind of intervention would restore a moral dimension to our foreign policy. It could foster a new attitude in South America toward American leadership, perhaps for a generation. And it might even lay to rest the neocolonial image that haunts us in the hemisphere. Whether we like it or not, the United States will determine the future for millions of people. It's up to us to decide if we exercise that power by design or default. ■

American officials in Liberia and in Washington, bolstered by their knowledge that Liberia was only one of many small countries competing for policymakers' attentions.

Quiet American

In other countries, what form should our "political action" take? In contrast to the more controversial covert operations with which he has come to be associated, William Casey has also proposed a "nation building" strategy. In a recent speech in Fulton, Missouri, the CIA director urged America to foster "the infrastructure of democracy, the system of a free press, unions,

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political parties, universities, which allows a people to choose its own ways." With Tubman, this approach might well have been effective. However, Casey's strategy is doomed to fail with more recalcitrant regimes. His notion of applying pressure is limited largely to demands "tactfully and privately" delivered "that our friends observe certain standards of behavior with regard to basic human rights," along with "land reforms, corruption, and the like." Tolbert might have listened to private lectures by our ambassador on his and his brother's acquisitive abuse of power, but if a leader is not willing to listen we should make clear that we have ways of embarrassing the regime if he doesn't respond—and that we are willing to use them. Demands "privately delivered" to countries like South Africa and the Philippines seem to have fallen on deaf ears—and have failed to identify the United States with change and progress in local eyes. For all its short-

Shutting Off the Dissent Channel

The State Department sent F. Allen "Tex" Harris to Argentina in 1977 to report on human rights in that country. Harris's dispatches on physical abuse, kidnapping, and murder by military death squads enraged the Argentine government. The foreign service officer's work also angered his boss, Ambassador Raul Castro. So Harris turned to the State Department's "dissent channel" and continued to send reports of his grisly findings to Washington.

Harris's experience illustrates the importance of the dissent channel, an official program established in 1971 to facilitate the flow of controversial views from embassy staffs to Foggy Bottom. When senior officers are reluctant to forward the results of honest reporting by their subordinates because it contains politically unwelcome revelations or opinions with which they disagree, the dissent channel offers a means of reaching the decision-makers. But today, the dissent channel is dying, and Tex Harris's story provides at least one explanation why: sending home bad news can cripple your career. After persisting in reporting Argentine military abuses, Harris received extremely poor efficiency ratings and was passed over for promotions. Last year he finally received a promotion, but only after he was honored by the American Foreign Service Association for his "bureaucratic courage to stand up for what was right."

The State Department opened the dissent channel amid a flurry of leaks indicating internal turmoil over President Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia and support the Pakistani government in its brutal attempt to suppress unrest in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). *The New York Times* suggested at the time that the department wanted to curb disclosures to the press. As secretary of state, Henry Kissinger seemed to confirm the view that the channel was intended primarily as a means for FSOs to blow off steam rather than challenge policy. In 1973 Kissinger acknowledged the importance of dissenting views but stressed, "We cannot operate the government or the department if dissent is taken to the press."

Cables filed through the dissent channel have rarely changed policy. Active and retired foreign service officers concerned about the lack of policy debate within the State Department last year formed an organization called the Sages' Group and released a statement charging that the channel is "merely a management tool for letting the system vent bottled-up pressures...without affording these dissenting voices a real impact on policy." Still, Tex Harris is not the only foreign service officer to use the channel and then suffer a reprimand or demotion. After filing a cable in 1974 protesting Kissinger's interventionist policy in Cyprus, Thomas Boyatt was removed from his position as director of the Office of Cypriot Affairs. In 1977, Arthur Purcell received unusually low performance ratings as a result of filing controversial reports on labor disputes in Australia. In 1979, Warren Christopher, then deputy secretary of state, sent a memorandum to all State Department employees, saying, "Two cases have come to my attention in which superiors actively discouraged personnel from using the dissent channel or penalized employees for having done so." No public reprimand of the un-

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comings, the Carter human rights policy benefited the subjects of repressive regimes throughout the world. There is no reason that public displays of displeasure cannot be used to encourage the democratizing of the political process as well.

In extreme cases, where prolonged repression has already built up a potentially dangerous head of steam, the CIA has a valid and useful function. It is not the stereotyped "bad guy" role of helping local security services ferret out opponents of the regime; but rather, the quiet role of establishing contact and working with the opposition. It's worth recalling that the CIA has played such roles in the past. Liberals tend to forget this now; memories of Kissinger's and Nixon's flawed "Track II" and the heavy-handed machinations by American business in Chile overshadow the CIA's positive role in supporting the Christian Democrats of Eduardo Frei as an

By Kai Bird

named superiors followed.

One hundred twenty-three dissents have been filed through the channel since its inception, with a record 28 in 1977 under the Carter administration. But the totals have dropped sharply under President Reagan; only six formal dissents were filed last year. Supporters of the administration argue that disuse of the system reflects increasing harmony within the Foreign Service. "It is possible that the decline in the use of the dissent channel... represents the success of the system... rather than a deliberate effort to squelch different views," says Alfred Atherton, until recently the director general of the Foreign Service. Other career diplomats dismiss the fuss over the channel as irrelevant. "The dissent channel is a crock," says one foreign service officer working in the Far East bureau. "If you feel strongly enough about an issue, you go to your ambassador and you do what you must to get things changed."

Others, such as the members of the Sages' Group, are less sanguine about the situation. They attribute the atrophy of the dissent channel to a fear of retribution and the Reagan administration's pointed hostility toward those who question the White House line. These critics point out, for example, the purging of officers who disagreed with Reagan's policies in Central America and the transfer of China specialists prominent under the Carter administration to posts outside their area of expertise because the president feared they would not implement his pro-Taiwanese tilt on China policy.

John Reinerston, a foreign service officer who attributes the lack of dissent to past instances of retribution, has written that the channel is "one important index of individual political integrity within the Foreign Service.... By that index, we are failing badly." In a recent interview, Reinerston said that under Reagan "alternative ideas are less welcome," and "fear of expressing them is fairly pervasive."

In addition to providing foreign service officers with an emblem of their professionalism and a means to follow their conscience, the dissent channel theoretically permits knowledgeable diplomats in the field to advise decision-makers when policies made in Washington are inconsistent with the realities on the ground. Foreign service officers have a reputation for timidity when it comes to advancing new ideas, which by the very fact of being new, risk being labeled "unsound." For the bold ones, the dissent channel provides a potential opportunity to grab top officials by their pin-striped lapels and give them the straight dope. It's a sound idea because for every policy adopted regarding the Middle East, Central America, or the Soviet Union, there is an alternative, equally coherent view that could be expressed but isn't. Instead, conformity is rewarded and all but the most aggressive officers are discouraged from thinking that they can influence policy with their reporting.

The dissent channel may never have been taken too seriously on the seventh floor of the State Department. The result has been that our foreign policy has suffered for lack of thorough debate and knowledgeable challenge. Sadly, it now looks like the dissent channel may be closing down altogether. ■

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alternative to radicals on the right or the left. We helped save democracy in Italy in similar fashion in the turmoil of the late 1940s. Whispering campaigns and street demonstrations to bring pressure upon a recalcitrant regime are also possibilities.

There is another valid role for the CIA in our relations with repressive regimes: to counter extreme right-wing groups such as the "death squads" in El Salvador. It's been naive to suppose that protests by our ambassador to the Salvadoran government would be effective. The balance of power there is too tenuous, the courts themselves too threatened by the death squads, and the military looms too darkly in the background. The CIA should have been trying to penetrate the squads and their command structure (not assisting these squads, as some evidence has suggested). More important, we should be willing to do something with the information that results from such efforts, even if it proves embarrassing to the government. Our agents could publicize the names of both killers and targeted victims, give advance notice of operations, discredit the death squads by forgeries—whatever is necessary to destroy their terrible effectiveness.

Of course, it's not possible to dispatch the CIA to every oppressed nation on earth where such action may be desirable. But in countries where we are involved for better or worse—El Salvador for example—the CIA *can* serve a useful role. On the other hand, the CIA should rely much less upon "covert" operations—political or paramilitary—in the Third World that are inherently overt to those against whom they are directed. Harry Rositzke, a former Soviet expert with the CIA, suggested (among others) in *The Washington Post* that if Nicaragua's ports had to be mined, it should have been a military, not a CIA, function. If we are not proud of such actions—if we aren't willing to take open responsibility for them—then we shouldn't do them. Covert operations encourage an administration to wade into foreign commitments that the American public doesn't know about and ultimately will not support. It is policy-making by back room elites. When foreign policy is out in the open, it is more likely to be what the American people want. A tighter rein on covert actions would be an effective way to ward off that national bugaboo—another Vietnam.

Generally, covert operations are most suited for small-scale, short-term projects that do not become institutionalized—infiltrating the Salvadoran death squads to undo them would be a prime example. Sometimes we need to resort to such actions when our open support would embarrass those we seek to help. But it is far better to go public in support of an Aquino (whose followers are generally pro-American) than to prop up covertly a Ferdinand Marcos.

After all, isn't this where our foreign service comes in? Most of what the CIA does—especially the gathering of information—the foreign service is supposed to do in the first place. There wouldn't be as much *need* for the CIA if more foreign service officers were doing their jobs—if they weren't afraid to apply political leverage in the right direction or to displease top officials in their host countries. (Frequently, by the time the CIA gets involved, it's too late anyway.) But this kind of intervention requires a president who encourages State Department employees, from the ambassador down to the 32-year-old political officer on his first assignment, to take risks. This in turn means standing up for those employees when an unhappy, corrupt regime tries to send them packing.

When the officials on the ground feel that their promotions will come from taking the initiative rather than waiting for their duty tour to end, we will have effected a true revolution in American foreign policy. It's a revolution that, in the long term, is the best strategy for promoting the kind of revolution we enjoyed two centuries ago—and for avoiding an altogether more unpleasant type of revolution later on. ■

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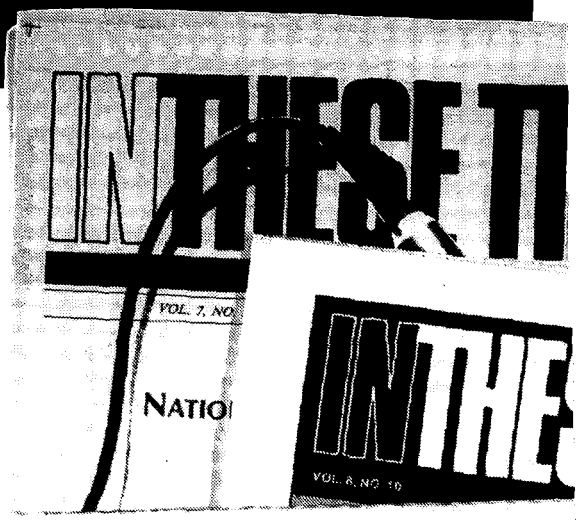

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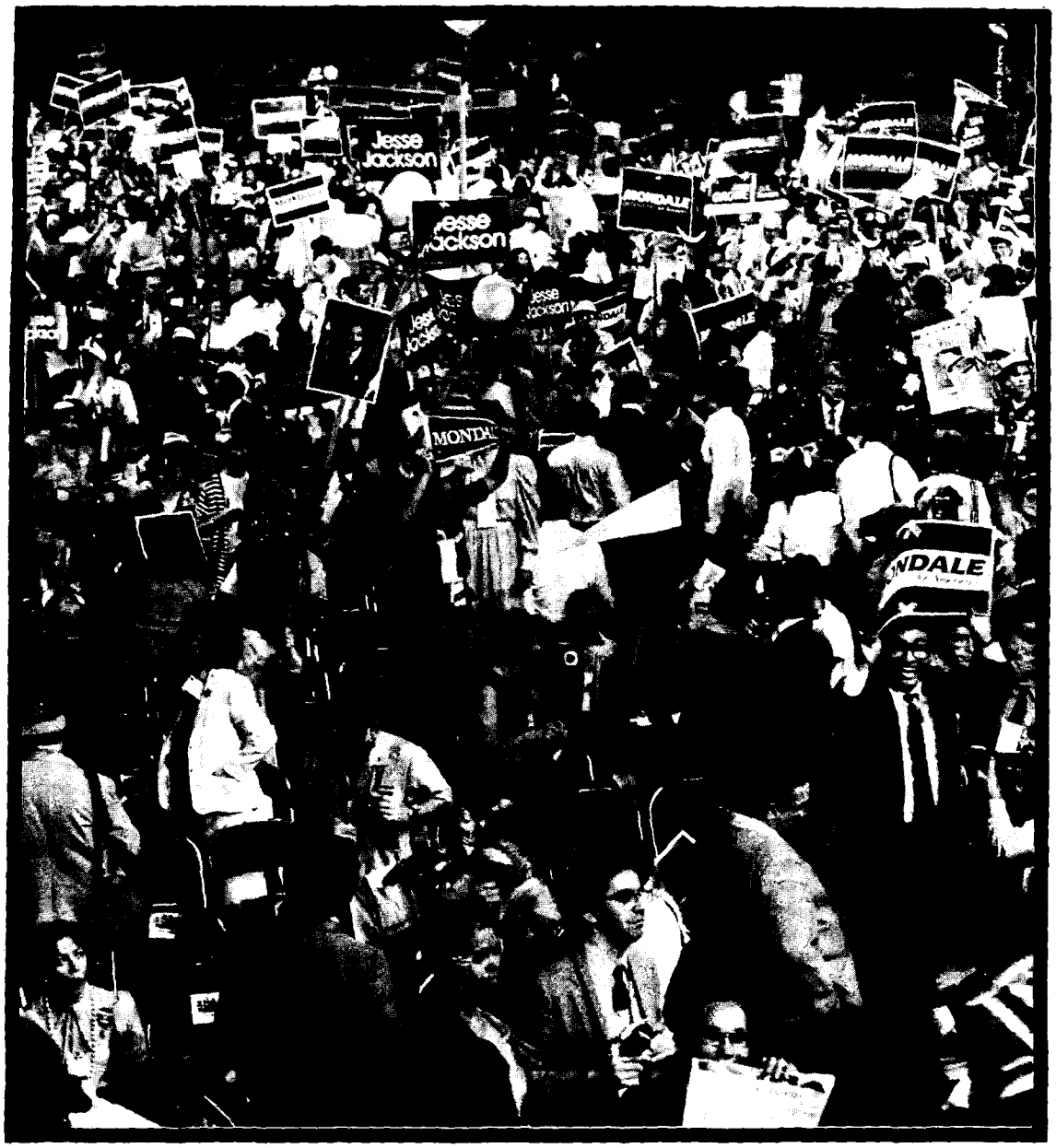

Photo: John O'Leary

The Caucus-Happy Democrats

By Paul M. Barrett

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Michele Aisenberg holds two unshakable beliefs about the Democratic National Committee's official caucuses. First, she's sure that altogether too much fuss has been made about the Democrats' special-interest problem. "There aren't more than five people out there who know what the caucuses are or what's going on with them," says Aisenberg, who herself heads the DNC Women's Caucus. "If they knew," she adds, "they wouldn't care."

But, warns Aisenberg, if Paul Kirk, the new DNC chairman, follows through on his promise to decertify her group along with the other caucuses, *then* you'll see a special-interest problem, brother. Kiss the gender gap goodbye: Women "would be very angry. They'd be hurt, justifiably, and they wouldn't have relations with us."

Rick Stafford, chair of the DNC Lesbian/Gay Caucus thinks the party might survive without official caucuses. The thing that bothers him is that if someone else is going to get up a group to talk shop, well, then he wants one, too. "I represent a lot of Democrats," says Stafford, "as many as some state chair from Mississippi or some other state or region." Alluding to a recently formed Democratic policy study group headed by Governors Charles Robb of Virginia and Bruce Babbitt of Arizona, Stafford adds, "They're an interest group, and if they get recognition as white males, we should get recognition for our interests."

Thomas Hsieh, who chairs the Asian/Pacific Caucus, says his organization provides the crucial link between the party and Asian- and Pacific-Americans. Without it, his people might just walk: "It would be a stupid thing," Hsieh says with anger. "If the Democratic party wants to represent us, good. But if they show us they don't represent us, we should get the hell out of there. . . .We might as well become Republicans."

The fact is that more than five people "out there" know about and have some opinion on the DNC caucuses. With her own ominous talk of mass female desertions, Michele Aisenberg demonstrates that the issue is more than just op/ed-page hot air. The millions who watched the 1984 Democratic National Convention saw the caucuses at each other's throats, as well as Walter Mondale's. Those sifting through the wreckage from November for signs of Democratic rebirth find instead bloodied survivors wrestling over arcane rules, while still more caucuses line up for recognition.

A growing number of people within the party have begun to admit that the caucuses create an image of factionalism and petty procedural obsession. Paul Kirk's first significant gesture as DNC chairman was to rebuff the Black Caucus in a major turf war (see "Loyal, But Angry," by Paul Wieck, page 26). Kirk has since told NBC News that "the caucus system. . .is political nonsense" and vowed to remove the groups' official status. In an interview for this article, however, Kirk backed off that promise and said he doesn't want to be "harshly on the record" as planning to dissolve the organizations.

The caucuses create more than a public relations problem. The emotion and energy spent on forming, serving, and preserving caucuses are resources not spent on shaping substantive policies and a coherent vision of the country's future. Voters focus on the only apparent action the Democrats offer: intramural jousting among interest groups. And for all the flak the caucuses attract, they accomplish very little, even for the constituencies they represent.

Gavels for all

The official caucuses are seven in number—just enough to constitute that favorite pundits' punching bag, the *litany of special interests.* The big three—blacks, Hispanics, and women—hold designated seats on the DNC Executive Committee, a privilege separate from the traditional reservation of a vice-chairman's slot for a member of each of those groups. The Asian/Pacifics, Lesbian/Gays, Liberal/Progressives, and Business/Professionals round out the current roster. Others have indicated interest, including native Americans, farmers, Israel supporters, the disabled, and a polyglot European "ethnic" group. A handful of male WASPs even collected signatures last summer for an "All-American Caucus."

The list has an artificial ring to it. Organized labor, after all, boasts no official caucus yet has a loud voice in party discussions. Moreover, you'd probably guess that Democratic women, say, caucused with a small "c" long before the in-house lobbying apparatus got so complicated. And you'd be right. Without official blessing, women have gathered to discuss tactics and policy for more than 50 years. Such informal sessions have long been common among a variety of groups, as they have been among the loosely

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organized "auxiliaries" of the Republican National Committee. In fact, DNC members have been in the caucus certification business for only three years—and they got into it, ironically, hoping to keep special interests in check.

"It was a gatekeeping decision," recalls Ann Lewis, former political director of the DNC. "There was confusion over by-laws and how the elected chairs of the caucuses went about getting what they wanted....An official recognition process was an effort to bring things under control." In February 1982, the DNC Executive Committee established a formal procedure for achieving caucus status. The central requirements included a petition of support from 10 percent of the 377-member DNC, a constitution, and official operating procedures. The executive committee assumed the 10 percent threshold would prevent too many splinter groups from requesting recognition. "We thought that would control things, set a limit," says Lewis, who now heads Americans for Democratic Action. "We were wrong. What you find is that 10 percent of a large group, especially one like ours, will sign anything of that sort."

Create a bureaucratic procedure, and someone's bound to use it. Give someone a chairman's gavel, and the rest of the gang will want one, too.

"They wanted to discourage caucuses...[but] what they did was tell people how to be a caucus,"

Loyal, But Angry

Members of the Democratic Black Caucus gathered in a cramped hotel conference room January 31 to endorse a candidate for the Democratic National Committee vice-chairmanship traditionally reserved for a black. Illinois State Comptroller Roland Burris, a Mondale man in 1984, received 27 votes. Incumbent Vice-Chairman Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary, Indiana and a Jackson supporter, got the nod with 32.

But Burris, who enjoys a reputation for honesty and competence, stayed in the race, campaigning hard, according to some DNC members. Paul Kirk, the newly elected chairman, refused to push Burris out by ratifying the caucus endorsement. The full DNC elected Burris 198 to 148.

Outraged members of the Black Caucus attacked Kirk for threatening the "sanctity" of their group. They called Burris an "Uncle Tom." Rep. Mickey Leland, chairman of the caucus, termed the affair "despicable." Jesse Jackson summoned a reporter to accuse the entire DNC of "racism." Jackson vowed he would never deal with the traitor Burris.

The emotional brushfire ignited by what might have been simply a bit of internal DNC housekeeping reflects the intense symbolic importance to some black Democrats of having an officially sanctioned caucus. To these activists, the caucus confirms their role in the party and guarantees them a podium from which to express their views. "We never had representation in the top echelons...until we organized the Black Caucus," says Jessie Rattley, a founder and current member. Rattley defends the caucus system in spite of evidence that it has fragmented the party (see the accompanying article by Paul M. Barrett). She further argues that the black group will achieve the respect it's due only by arranging coalitions with other caucuses.

In making their case for the caucus system, blacks frequently recall their frustration over having to seek political equality in organizations run by whites during the civil rights movement. Within the Democratic party, informal black caucuses sprang up in the late 1960s to meet the demand for an independent black voice. The DNC extended official recognition to caucuses in 1982.

Many black DNC members see the Black Caucus in this larger context of a continuing struggle to assert themselves within their own party. Jessie Rattley, for example, sees current criticism of caucuses as another example of the party "dilut[ing] what blacks tried to gain by getting together with other groups....If we don't have the opportunity to come together and reach a consensus, we will give up some of our gains....We've had to fight for everything. People in power concede nothing."

The vision of a party made up of distinctly defined sub-groups is common among supporters of the Black Caucus. Asked to describe the Democrats' electoral base, Roland Burris

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says Billie Carr, chair of the Liberal/Progressive Caucus. Members of the party's left fringe had gathered for years on an informal basis, says Carr. "I don't think [formal recognition] was an absolutely necessary step....But when the handicapped come to me, or the Jewish group comes to me, I sign every petition. How are you going to not sign one of those petitions?"

Anne Campbell, a member of the executive committee, opposed the formalization of caucuses, although she says discussion of the idea was "simple and pro forma." But now Campbell is helping mount the drive for a Hillel Caucus to represent Jews and supporters of Israel. "The purpose is not [to get] a piece of the action to keep up with the other caucuses," says Campbell. "But as long as others exist, there should be one for those who are concerned about Israel and issues related to Jews....If you're going to have caucuses, you should have them all."

Rules of the game

Caucus facts:

Each caucus elects a chair. Active membership rolls, drawn from DNC ranks, generally fluctuate in the high double digits. You don't have to fit a caucus's label to join; heterosexuals, for example, work with the Lesbian/Gay Caucus. Some parliamentary junkies belong to several groups.

By Paul Wieck

responds: "We have a very solid base of blacks—who are our most loyal supporters—a loyal Jewish base, a relatively strong labor base....And so on."

Criticism of the caucuses has come from a variety of sources, none more vehement than southern state Democratic organizations. Southern party leaders argue that their concerns have been overshadowed by those of "special interests" such as blacks, and as a result moderate and conservative Democrats have failed to support the party's nominees.

Bob Slagle Jr., chairman of the Texas Democratic state committee, has, for example, repeatedly blamed special-interest caucuses for Democratic failures, singling out Jesse Jackson and the Black Caucus as prime examples. "Jesse's public demands carried a heavy toll," says Slagle. "The whole special-interest argument wasn't being debated publicly until this happened."

To black leaders, the special-interest tag has undercurrents of a racist code. "Caucus," says Jessie Rattley, enunciating the word with a bristling contempt, has become "nothing but another buzz word like 'quotas' or 'welfare.' " Slagle counters that he rejects the image of a party driven by factional interests, not the aspirations of caucus members. But this is of small comfort to blacks who equate the dismantling of the caucus system with an attack on substantive black achievements—all to appease those white voters in the South.

Party leaders should confront the racial issue rather than pretend it does not exist. But just because there are bad reasons for ending the caucus system does not mean there aren't good reasons, too.

First, blacks don't vote Democratic because the DNC formally recognizes a black caucus. Above all, President Reagan's unabashed indifference toward the plight of poor blacks and his inept handling of civil rights issues kept blacks hitched to the Democratic ticket in 1984. Sharon Pratt Dixon, newly elected DNC treasurer, warns that many middle-class blacks voted for Mondale "reluctantly." Dixon, who is black, argues for preserving the caucus system, saying, "You don't discipline forces which support you." But she adds that "the caucuses are not the problem ....We are preoccupied with the process because we have no message."

To some extent, however, the caucuses themselves *are* the problem. Voters will not flock to a party that presents itself as an agglomeration of competing interest groups. Since the DNC caucuses enjoy only minor procedural privileges, it's hard to see how blacks—or other groups—would lose much of a tangible nature by relenting on this point. The larger problem is the lack of unifying themes to compete with those of the GOP. By cooperating in a general effort to diminish the special-interest issue, blacks would strengthen the ability of the party to defeat the Republicans—who seem a much greater threat to their agenda than does Paul Kirk. ■

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A caucus comes with perks. You get notification of DNC happenings, mention on official agendas, reserved meeting space at DNC gatherings, and possibly an opportunity to address the full committee.

Some caucuses are more equal than others. For example, in addition to their executive committee slots, which were specially awarded in 1983, the blacks, Hispanics, and women get staff help from the DNC Political Division. Barbara Hansberry, a political division staff member, says she does some work for the women but spends "85 percent" of her time on Asian/Pacific Caucus business. Carr of the Liberal/Progressive Caucus says her outfit gets no such assistance. Although the DNC doesn't provide discrete budgets for caucuses, Aisenberg of the Women's Caucus says that she gets reimbursed for certain expenses, such as telephone calls.

By definition, caucus members are party activists. They participate in state and regional politics, raise campaign funds, hold dinner-dances. They push platform planks, organize primaries, and attend presidential nominating conventions.

But Democrats did these things before February 1982. Jewish members of the party do them now, and they don't have a caucus yet. So do farmers and "ethnics" of European descent. Bettie Baca, a DNC staff member who works for the Hispanic Caucus, points out that Hispanic political groups have operated nationally and within the party for the past 15 years. Having a caucus has made it more convenient to arrange general DNC meetings, she says, but "otherwise, it hasn't really made any difference at all." Says Carr: "It might even be better if things went back to being more informal, without lines drawn" between different interest groups.

Products of what DNC members concede was a procedural miscarriage, the caucuses are infected by that peculiarly Democratic strain of Rulesmania. The malady also causes uncontrollable fits of delegate selection reform (five major attacks in 15 years) and cancerous growth of the presidential primary schedule.

Still, politics is a lot more fun when you've got a committee you can call your own.

Michele Aisenberg, for example, stops to ponder the question: What's the advantage of having an official caucus rather than operating outside the DNC umbrella? "There's my seat on the executive committee, that's an advantage." A pause. "The staff person...and the budget [drawn from funds allocated generally for women's affairs]."

Losing that would stifle the women's movement and send Democratic loyalists running into the arms of the GOP? Well, there's more: "After a Women's Caucus meeting," says Aisenberg, "women will come up to me and tell me it felt like it had some meaning, like they really did something." In regular DNC meetings of the last several years, she explains, "the discussion has been zero and participation about the same. People were getting pretty frustrated. They wonder whether it is worth the money to fly to a meeting where they get nothing done and there's no knowledge of the grass roots."

Caucuses give DNC members an opportunity to pass meaningful paper—or at least something to argue about. Rick Stafford of the Lesbian/Gay Caucus recalls how he and some DNC colleagues proposed at the 1984 national convention that each recognized caucus receive a designated seat on the three standing committees of the DNC: Rules, Resolutions, and Credentials. "To be honest, we had no idea it would pass," says Stafford. "It wasn't a serious thing, and we were very surprised."

So were other DNCers once the dust settled. Says DNC member Richard Koster: "The whole thing was particularly disgusting because it elevated the caucuses symbolically without having any common-sense benefit."

In practical terms, the resolution was unworkable. It envisioned committees that would be expanding constantly to accommodate a potentially endless list of caucuses. In principle, the Stafford resolution violated the DNC charter's prohibition of mandatory quotas "in any...party affairs."

Speaking on behalf of the Lesbian/Gay Caucus, Stafford himself supported a successful measure rescinding his resolution at the midwinter DNC meeting in Washington. "It wasn't worth fighting," he says. At the same meeting, a proposal by Richard Koster to decertify the caucuses altogether failed to reach the full DNC for a vote. Stafford echoes other caucus chairs in terming the upshot a compromise: nothing lost except some committee seats that no one was very serious about in the first place.

Politics by separation

Stafford's gambit brought to a head the building unease among some Democratic officials over the impact of the caucuses on the party. With few exceptions, the spectacle in San Fran-

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cisco highlighted narrow-minded infighting rather than unification. Hispanics threatened mutiny because Walter Mondale couldn't express emphatically enough his opposition to immigration reform. Black and white women feuded publicly over who was strong-arming whom in the Women's Caucus. Having inflamed Jews in the "Hymietown" and Farrakhan incidents, Jesse Jackson battled vehemently on the convention floor for long-shot platform amendments. The Mondale camp, for its part, used the platform and the convention simply to soothe egos and smooth dissension. There was a program for every interest group but little that linked the prospective beneficiaries to each other or their party.

"There can't be much dispute that we failed to articulate common goals," says Governor Babbitt. Ann Lewis, one of the architects of the official caucus apparatus, acknowledges that "when the script doesn't attract the interest of the audience, and the actors don't create excitement, then everyone concentrates on criticizing the scenery and the stagehands." Paul Kirk has already taken the message on the road, telling southern party leaders recently: "The proliferation of caucuses makes diversity a weakness. And if caucuses are a reflection of politics by separation, that is a formula for defeat."

The caucuses do reflect politics by separation. Rather than define themselves as Democrats, party activists split into factions that thrive on dramatization of intergroup rivalries and castigation of the party as a whole. Says Thomas Hsieh of the Asian/Pacific Caucus, "Asians get squeezed between the privilege of whites and the affirmative action given to blacks or Hispanics . . . .We want to be a part of the society, and we feel the Democratic party could have done better for us. . . . [The Republican party] doesn't give a shit about helping anybody. But they don't give affirmative action to anybody, and maybe we'd be better off there. . . .Taking away the caucus could only be seen as a threat to us."

Once caucuses exist as formal mechanisms within the party, their members concentrate on oiling their own little gears rather than worrying about what direction the larger vehicle should take. During the midwinter meetings, for example, the caucuses fought over picking a chairman, designating a black vice-chairman, and staffing yet another delegate selection reform commission. Except for a few passing references in campaign speeches by the chairman candidates, little mention was made of President Reagan's 49-state sweep—the fourth Republican victory in the last five outings—or how to begin picking up the pieces for 1986 and 1988.

Impatient with DNC business-as-usual, elected politicians from the West and South have taken a first step away from caucus-think. With the leadership of Governors Babbitt and Robb and Rep. Richard Gephardt, among others, the 41-member Democratic Leadership Council plans to generate fresh ideas in a "serious think-tank atmosphere." Babbitt explains the "two missing links" in the party: "One is sustained attention to some overarching, unifying themes of the party in the national interest. Second is the procedural question: Wouldn't it be better to allow all of these groups to blossom on their own without subsidizing them and ossifying them?"

Diversity need not be a weakness. The Democrats have established a proud history since the Depression of bringing excluded groups into the political mainstream. A degree of interest-group fervor fuels the party and adds vigor to its campaigns. But recognizing the role of organized factions does not require that factionalism be woven into the fabric of the party. The danger of institutionalizing caucuses is that they alienate voters who don't feel bound to one or another sanctioned cause: *It's not that I don't want blacks or Asians in my party,* thinks the wavering white middle-class Democrat. *I just don't want their caucus poobahs claiming to speak for me based on some extremist agenda.*

Efforts such as the Babbitt-Robb policy council may succeed if they demonstrate that traditionally excluded groups can contribute to party dialogue without the caucus crutch. Unfortunately, the group has already permitted itself to be categorized simply as a moderate-to-conservative breakaway from the DNC. For example, Senator Sam Nunn, a member of the group, recently told *The New York Times*: "The moderate and conservative Democrats didn't make it past the first round of the primaries in 1984, and we want to change that."

An attack on caucuses easily can become a euphemism for an attack on the constituency groups whose names they bear. The Babbitt-Robb policy council will itself fall into the factional fracas if it becomes a mouthpiece for southerners and conservatives who resent sharing power and simply want the party to mimic the GOP.

What the Democrats should learn from the Republicans is not hostility or cynical condescension toward interest groups. Instead, Democrats should learn to speak to Americans *as* Americans. What else is a political party for? ■

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

To: All Staff Members

January 28, 1985

From: Raymon A. Noble, M.D. Noble
Chief, Health Services Office

Subject: LC Health Forum

The **Health Services Office** cordially invites you to attend the continuing series of Health Forums scheduled for **Wednesday, February 20, 1985 at 10:00 a.m.** It will be held in the Mumford Room, LM 649. An interpreter will be available for the hearing impaired.

TOPIC: COPING WITH THE STRESS OF A DIFFICULT SUPERVISOR

SPEAKER: Jeffrey Speller, M.D.
Cambridge Institute

Staff members will be permitted to attend on official time, workload permitting, with prior approval of their supervisor.

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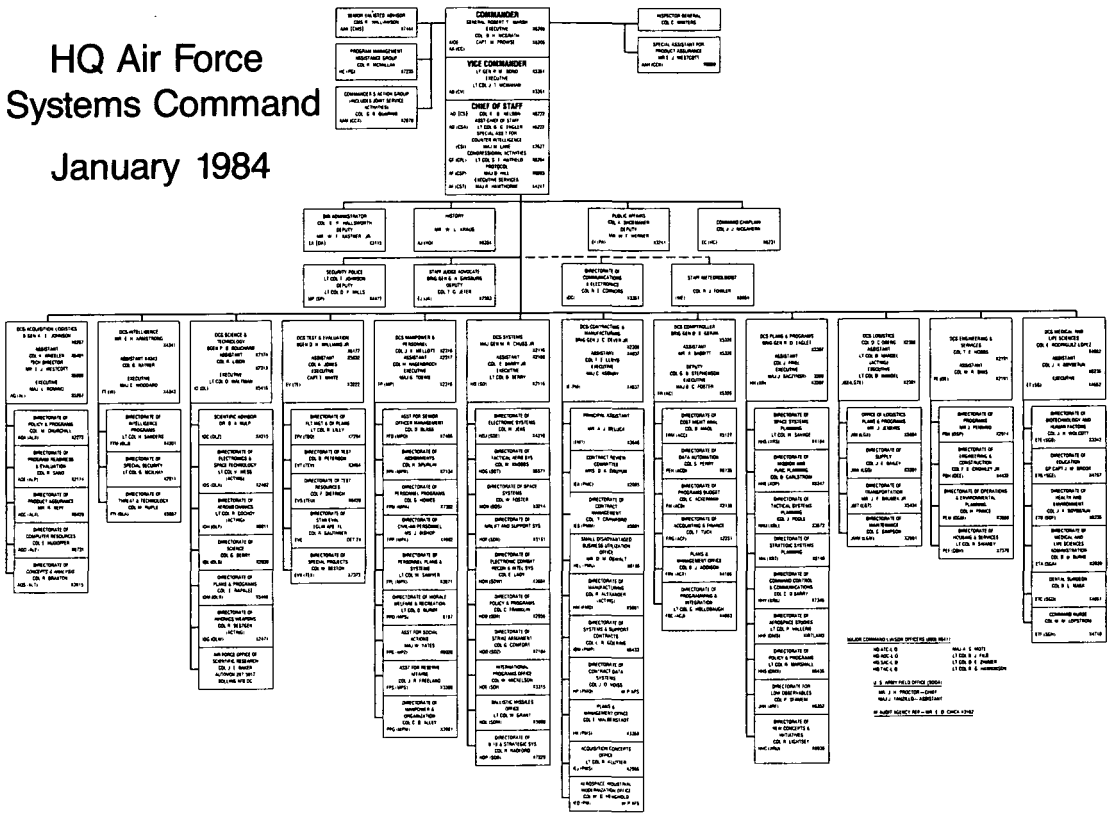

Colonels in Every Corner

Overpopulation at the Pentagon

By Edward N. Luttwak

Some years ago the Strategic Air Command came up with a major money-saving scheme: instead of flight-training its navigators by having them sit in B-52s, the SAC wanted to use civilian executive jets fitted with B-52 navigation consoles. The executive jets would cost $2 million or $3 million each, but they would be very cheap to maintain, and their small twin engines would burn less than one-tenth the fuel consumed by the eight engines of a B-52.

Having a large number of spare navigation consoles from scrapped B-52s in its depots, the SAC wanted the Air Force to buy the jets and planned to employ its own technicians to install the navigation equipment and convert the seating. It was calculated that the savings under this "companion trainer scheme" would pay for the purchase of the executive jets in a couple of years and yield large savings each year thereafter.

Edward N. Luttwak is a fellow at the Georgetown University Center for International and Strategic Studies. This article is adapted from his book, The Pentagon and the Art of War, *published by Simon and Schuster.* *© 1984 Edward N. Luttwak.*

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You'd think that the Air Force would want to encourage expeditious implementation of such common-sense cost-saving programs. But to avoid "fraud, waste, and mismanagement" and to apply all the available expertise, none of the Air Force's three operational commands (strategic, tactical, and airlift) is allowed to write its own specifications for the equipment it needs or to do its own purchasing. That's the job of the Air Force Systems Command.

Through the expert scrutiny of the Aeronautical Division of the Air Force Systems Command it was soon discovered that all the commercial jets the SAC wanted to buy had grave defects, which had somehow been overlooked by the hundreds of pilots who had flown them. In their ignorance, all those wealthy business executives, film stars, and plain rich folk had been flying for years in sadly inadequate aircraft of dubious reliability. But a remedy was at hand: the Systems Command officers were eager to spell out all the necessary modifications in abundant detail. They were ready to supervise the research and development to modify the aircraft, as well as the actual rebuilding. Meanwhile, the Electronic Systems Division in Massachusetts immediately rejected the foolish notion that secondhand B-52 navigation consoles would be adequate for the new aircraft. Since the Aeronautical Division was insisting on so many costly modifications, it was only logical to fit "proper" navigation equipment into the aircraft. Moreover, additional electronics would need much more cooling power than had been allowed for in the original redesign, and that in turn would require more powerful engines, for which the airframe would have to be further modified.

The upshot: B-52 navigators are still being trained in B-52s, with their eight thirsty engines. By the time the Systems Command had finished with the original idea, the trainer conversion would have cost far more than any possible fuel saving.

The Pentagon's bureaucratic jungle is teeming with monsters like the Air Force Systems Command. Rather than improve national security, these institutions serve as havens for one of the greatest internal threats to the American military: the bloated ranks of mid-level officers. Countless species of commands, departments, and bureaus have expanded in the past 35 years to accommodate tens of thousands of colonels and captains whose main job becomes fighting for turf against their colleagues down the hall. The result is not just added expense, as in the case of the aborted B-52 training project, but also a preference for overelaborate weapons and a hostility toward any innovation that does not require extensive research and development. Snuggled into layers of excess bureauracy, many mid-level officers lose sight of the operational needs of the military while pursuing the narrowest goals within the boundaries of their own offices.

Preparing to mobilize

In 1945, the United States was more fully mobilized than ever before or since, with more than 12 million men under arms. There were 143,558 officers of the middle ranks (from major to colonel or Navy lieutenant commander to captain), 1.3 of them per 100 enlisted men. There was much for those officers to do then—with, for example, some 90 Army divisions and some 40 corps, Army-Group, and theater headquarters in need of staffs. But the proportion of middle-ranking officers had changed by 1950, the historical low point in the overall strength of the armed forces. There were then 51,241 middle-ranking officers, four per 100 enlisted men—more than three times the ratio of 1945. That was a result of key decisions made before 1945.

As early as 1943, when the war against Germany and Japan was still being fought, selected staff officers were given the task of planning the structure and missions of their services in the postwar world. Many of these officers had personally experienced the massive disorder of the sudden mobilization that followed Pearl Harbor. The planners prepared for another great mobilization that would bring ten million or more Americans back into service. Each branch of the military did its best to retain the largest possible number of middle and senior officers.

Congress never formally approved the mass remobilization plans and neither did higher civilian officials. There was no need for any such approval, because there was nothing controversial about those plans. In 1945 the Cold War had yet to begin, but it was already clear that the overriding task of the armed forces would be to deter a war with the Soviet Union. The need for service structures specifically designed for quick remobilization seemed obvious. The largest possible number of middle-ranking (and senior) officers were to be retained on active duty, in storage as it were, ready to take charge of greatly expanded forces in the event of another global war.

This argument for remobilization was sound, and it remains sound today. But it does not

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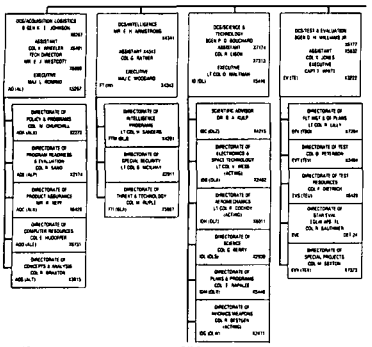

If it could get away with it, the Systems Command would write specifications for toothbrushes—and none already on the market would be found acceptable.

necessarily lead to the conclusion that extra officers should be kept on active duty. One obvious alternative is to rely on civilian reservists. The military experience of countries as diverse as Switzerland and Israel (see sidebar) shows that part-time reserve officers can attain high competence in this way, with not much more than one month a year of courses and exercises, as well as occasional one-day refreshers. It is true that many active-duty officers have a low opinion of their reserve counterparts, especially in the Army National Guard. But even if part-timers are thought incapable of commanding large formations, they certainly could fill many staff positions in the combat forces, and even more in training, logistics, and administration.

In spite of its merits, the reserve-officer solution was rejected—if it was considered at all—by the planners of the postwar defense establishment. Instead, the extra officers who would be needed only in a large war simply were kept on active duty. Assuming that the middle-ranking officers of 1945 were fully employed leading vast forces in combat, their counterparts of 1950 must have been greatly underemployed.

Divide and multiply

Had the surplus officers been allowed to remain at home, had their salaries and benefits been granted as sinecures, no great harm would have been done. A rich country can afford to keep some tens of thousands idle. Unfortunately, the many middle-ranking officers not needed in peacetime did not remain idle. Instead, the headquarters staffs, the supply organizations, and all the military bureaucracies expanded to absorb them, subdividing the work into thinner and thinner slices to keep everyone busy.

The Korean War mobilization of 1951-52 might have arrested the middle-level officer bulge. Had there been no expansion in the middle ranks, there would still have been 1.6 middle-level officers per 100 men, comfortably in excess of the 1945 ratio and undoubtedly sufficient. But thousands of middle-ranking World War II veterans were recalled, swelling their numbers to 94,425 in 1952, almost twice as many as in 1950.

After the Korean War, when the official strategy of "massive" nuclear retaliation justified a diminished reliance on conventional forces, the number of enlisted men in the four services continued to decline. But the number of middle-ranking officers did not decline in proportion. In fact, after a small dip during the post-Korean demobilization, there was a steady growth in their number, so that the ratio continued to increase.

By 1960 there were 101,537 mid-level officers; at the peak of American involvement in Vietnam in 1968 there were 133,246. As overall numbers dropped through the 1970s, so did those of the middle ranks. But at last count, in May 1983, there were 97,639 mid-rank officers, a ratio of 5.3 per 100 enlisted—*four times* as high as the 1945 ratio. In contrast, the ratio of junior officers (from second lieutenant to captain or Navy ensign to lieutenant) to enlisted remained stable at 1 to 10 from 1945 through 1983.

Over the years, the mobilization argument could explain a relatively high ratio of officers to enlisted men, but it could not possibly explain the steady *increase* in the ratio that took place. If the services were taking out remobilization insurance, they should have done many other things as well, which they conspicuously failed to do—notably, design basic weapons suitable for mass production.

In addition to the mobilization plans, there are other explanations for what has happened to the officer corps. First, rank inflation, the familiar "grade creep" of government bureaucracies, has substituted for all salary increases when Congress is not in a generous mood toward the Pentagon. Second, with the introduction of competitively

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paid military service (the so-called "all-volunteer force"), there was a reluctance to dismiss officers in mid-career even if they were less necessary than ever before. To put it differently, officers looked after one another in difficult times. While in no sense valid justifications, rank inflation and protection of loyal careerists are not in themselves greatly harmful. If colonels do exactly the same job that majors used to do, if Navy captains take over the functions of commanders, with no change in the structure itself, the only harmful result is that military spending increases by the very small amount of the salary differentials.

Unfortunately, this is not what happened. The greater number of middle-ranking officers were absorbed in this period by a process in which the military bureaucracies not only kept expanding but also subdivided their functions to absorb the surplus officers in many new *separate* offices.

Who's the boss?

The Air Force Systems Command, enemy of economical B-52 training, is a case in point. The Systems Command has expanded and subdivided over the years to accommodate 10,524 officers, including no fewer than 34 generals, at last count (see chart). It is responsible for the acquisition of all the equipment that the Air Force introduces into service. The central headquarters of the Systems Command at Andrews Air Force Base, just outside Washington, D.C., is itself a very large bureaucracy. Headed by a four-star full general (whose own inner-office executive group includes four colonels) with a three-star lieutenant general serving as vice commander, the headquarters is coordinated by a chief of staff, who has his own well-staffed inner office. These officers supervise the 68 "directorates" that divide

A Lean, Mean Machine

The most successful military organization of our day, the Israel Defense Forces, has a much lower proportion of middle-ranking and senior officers than the American military. There are no four-star generals and only one three-star lieutenant general, officially described as "chief of staff" but in fact the professional commander of *all* Israeli armed forces. Under the Israeli single-service system, there is no independent air force or navy, but instead the the air corps and sea corps of the army. The chief of staff is always a ground-force officer.

Though a very large force by any standards, with almost as many combat aircraft as the Royal Air Force, the Israeli air corps is commanded by a single major general. The USAF has 120. The Israeli version of a systems command, staffed by a handful of colonels and headed by a one-star general, has in recent years successfully supervised the development of an entire range of advanced equipment, including air-to-air missiles, air-to-ground missiles, and pilotless aircraft, as well as the secret equipment employed in 1982 to destroy Syrian antiaircraft installations in Lebanon. Similarly, the Israeli sea corps—a very small but significant force with its powerful fleet of missile boats—is also commanded by a single two-star rear admiral. As for the ground forces, which have three times as many tanks as the British Army in 11 well-equipped armored divisions, their command structure is run by four major generals. The U.S. Army has 140. Five more two-stars head the entire IDF-wide support structure for manpower, logistics, training, intelligence, and planning. With two more two-stars in charge of the central headquarters, a military chief rabbi and a chief judge, and also the defense attache in Washington, the Israelis have a grand total of 16 major generals on active duty for their ground, air, and naval forces. The U.S. total is 362.

To be fair, American military forces are more than ten times as large. They are distributed on three continents and serve worldwide at sea. The Pentagon also needs senior officers for alliance commands in Europe and beyond. Many American military responsibilities, such as our nuclear forces, are totally unknown to the Israelis and demand a significant number of senior officers. The Pentagon could not posssibly function with only ten times as many generals and admirals as the IDF. (Actually there are 30 times as many.) So any direct comparison would be foolish. Still, it is interesting to compare the workings of a military structure in which the officer corps has been deliberately kept to a minimum with one that plainly has too many chiefs. —*E.N.L.*

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the functions of the headquarters among them. Mostly headed by colonels who report to 11 deputy chiefs of staff, these directorates cut the work into very fine slices indeed.

In addition to the directorates—which supervise the supervisors in the divisions outside the headquarters—there are nine supporting offices that provide services for the Andrews complex, including administration and "history," communications and electronics (not the kind that go into aircraft but what is needed by the headquarters itself), public affairs, police, and so on.

And that is only the central headquarters. The actual work of the Systems Command is distributed among four major divisions, each headed by a three-star lieutenant general. These are: space equipment (in Los Angeles), electronics (at Hanscom AFB, Massachusetts), aircraft (Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio), and armaments (Eglin AFB, Florida). In addition, there are eight other lesser divisions and "centers." Whatever else may be said, the acquisition of Air Force equipment does not suffer from a lack of supervision.

The first consequence of this organization is that the Air Force will not purchase readily available civilian products—such as the fancy executive jets—even when they are perfectly satisfactory in every way. With so many officers employed in specifying Air Force requirements, the research and development crews will rarely be deprived of work by the straight purchase of ready-made items. Much of what is laboriously specified by the Systems Command and eventually developed under its supervision to meet all those specifications is readily available from civilian sources at lower prices. There are, for example, $2,500 aircraft video recorders that cost $7,000 for the special Air Force version, $14,000 diesel generators that cost the Air Force $56,000, and several hundred other such products. If it could get away with it, the Systems Command no doubt would write Air Force specifications for toothbrushes—and make them so unusual that not one of the hundreds of toothbrushes on the market would be found acceptable.

When the Systems Command has a chance to design from scratch, it faithfully reproduces its own image: the grossly overelaborate structure yields equally overelaborate products. That outcome is manifest across-the-board, from missiles to lowly unguided munitions, but it is most dramatic in the case of manned combat aircraft. In fiscal year 1984, during the great Reagan buildup, Congress allowed the Air Force to purchase a grand total of 207 fighters, airlifters, intelligence aircraft, and bombers—not a colossal number by any standard.

Most of the 207 were fighters—36 twin-jet F-15s and 144 F-16s. (The latter are the famous, cheap "lightweight fighter" originally brought into existence by a brave band of dogfighting enthusiasts who successfully circumvented the Systems Command until the aircraft was very largely defined.) The F-15, a perfect representative of the Systems Command way of life, came in at $42.4 million in 1984. The price of the very cheap F-16—still widely regarded as sadly inadequate at Wright-Patterson, in spite of the many "enhancements" added—was $17.7 million per copy.

If a crew of skilled accountants were to explore the F-15 to find where the $42.4 million went, they would encounter everywhere the consequences of allowing the Air Force to employ so many of its surplus colonels in the Systems Command. The airframe is large and must therefore be costly—say, $10 million, including the overhead of the contractor and its plush Washington offices, the lawyers, the consultants, and so on. There are two engines, which cost at least $1 million each. Then there are the other parts, undercarriage, hydraulics, and more—a total of around $25 million. And with so many officers dedicated exclusively to the advancement of radar technology, the F-15 clearly *had* to have the ultimate radar with all the trimmings.

And so it went for each of the research-and-development "communities" and its subsystems, from flight controls to electronic countermeasures, from the air-conditioning crowd (a separate "community") to the weapons-delivery people, and more. The F-15 is a wonderful aircraft, and its "subsystems" have many virtues. But they also offer a lot of overperformance, mostly unusable in combat. They require much maintenance, and, above all, they raise the cost so high that the Air Force can buy only a very few F-15s (39 in 1983; 36 in 1984).

Mines that fly

Still, overelaboration merely costs money, and there is a second, much more serious, consequence of keeping a grossly overstaffed Systems Command: important military capabilities are lost because some things are not produced at all. It is certainly not that the Systems Command overlooks any category of air armaments. On the contrary, somewhere in the structure there are dozens of colonels investigating every possible air

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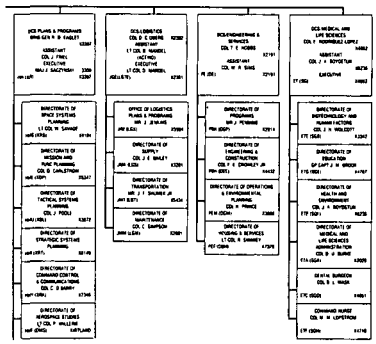
The problem is the refusal of R & D officers to put themselves out of business by declaring their work completed and ready for production.



weapon, actual or imagined. The problem is rather the refusal of the research-and-development officers to put themselves out of business by actually declaring their work completed and ready for production.

True, in the case of combat aircraft, the eagerness of a pilot-dominated Air Force to fly new planes gives a tremendous impulse to the development process. Similarly, the development of nuclear weapons is usually of great interest at the political level. But when it comes to things that pilots cannot fly and that are non-nuclear—tactical missiles, rockets, and bombs—there are no such countering impulses. Those policy orphans are left at the mercy of research-and-development bureaucracies, which have the strongest possible vested interest in *not* finishing their work.

At Eglin Air Force Base, home of the Systems Command's Armament Division, you'll find the usual hordes of colonels overseeing the research and development of tactical munitions. For Eglin and for the in-house Air Force labs, the completion of research and development for any one type of ordnance means that no more work can be expected in that line of business for 10 or 15 years. In spite of the phantasmagoria of "smart" weapons reported by the press, there are *very few* projects going (roughly one air-to-ground missile and one bomb type every ten years, a single air-to-air missile over 20 years). Underemployment is a chronic threat to bureaucratic survival.

The Eglin remedy is simple: having worked hard for as many years as possible to develop the best possible munition, instead of certifying the project as ready for production, the Armament Division suddenly uncovers new and wonderful technical possibilities. Researchers repudiate the ready-for-production munition as "less cost-effective," and everyone concerned can happily start at the beginning all over again.

For example, one crucial Air Force mission is to assist the ground forces against Soviet-style deep-column armored thrusts. It has long been understood that the best way to oppose armored thrusts from the air is to attack not the vehicles doing the advancing but rather the movement itself. This is accomplished by dropping anti-armor mines in large numbers across the enemy's intended paths of advance. To achieve a tolerable economy, these mines must be miniature munitions of advanced design that can be dispensed in large numbers from cluster-type bombs or special pods attached to the aircraft.

Beginning in the late 1960s, when the concept was first proposed (by the German defense ministry), the Systems Command set out to design suitable minelets. By the early 1970s, Eglin had a design ready for production, but the creators rejected their creation in favor of a second, more advanced, design concept. Thus no mines were produced, and the research-and-development process started again. That second design gave way to a third, very complicated, active minelet that was intended to "sense" nearby armor movements, determine their range and direction, jump up by a controlled explosion, and then hit the target with a self-forging fragment capable of penetrating thick armor. Such complexity in a device needed in huge numbers was suspect, but with the need totally unmet, even this flying munition was an attractive prospect.

It was not to be. Under the name "wide-area anti-armor munitions" (WAAM), a research-and-development program continues year after year, with no production in sight. In his fiscal year 1985 Annual Defense Report, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger once again presented the WAAM program with the usual glossy prose, asking for $27.3 million of development funding and zero production funding. No production funds were requested for 1986 either.

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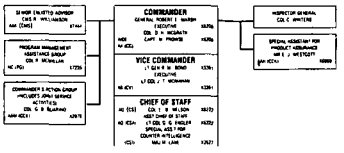
These goings-on should not be accepted cynically as bureaucratic inevitabilities. The systematic holding back of innovation in practice for the sake of greater innovations in theory has a serious impact on the overall military balance. Soviet numbers are supposed to be balanced by our more advanced technology; but only deployed weapons count, not blueprints and projects.

The Air Force has at times obliquely acknowledged the resistance of its own technical bureaucracy to real innovation. When the need was really urgent, the entire Systems Command structure was bypassed. That was the case when the innovative U-2 photographic-intelligence aircraft was needed in the late 1950s to achieve superhigh altitudes and very long ranges, and later when the more spectacular SR-71 intelligence aircraft was needed during the early 1960s.

In both cases the Lockheed aircraft company was allowed to insulate a small group of talented engineers in its secret "skunk works," and the Air Force let them work under loose supervision from the very top. The Lockheed engineers did not have to produce tons of documentation for the Aeronautical Division or satisfy the desires of each "subsystem community" and then each one of its directorates at Andrews. Nowadays the



Who Defines Defense?

For 158 years starting in 1789, we had what was starkly called—surely not on the advice of a public relations man—the Department of War. The National Security Act of 1947 renamed it the Department of the Army. This is accurate, descriptive, and unbiased; the same goes for the Department of the Navy and the Department of the Air Force.

The 1947 law also made the three neutrally named armed services parts of a new, larger whole called the Department of Defense. That name, doubtless well-intended and originally suitable, began long ago to evolve into as misleading and prejudicial a label as would be the "Department of Offense."

No one would question that the defense of the United States is the overriding mission of the Pentagon (a neutral word), but few would doubt that one of its principal activities is wasting colossal sums of money—particularly in procuring weapons that, if needed at all, are excessively complex, costly, and ineffective.

Yet no sharp line is drawn between defense and Defense. In the Constitution, one stated purpose, to "provide for the common defense," is a precondition for another, to "promote the general welfare." But the provision for Defense (not defense) has come to be inimical to the general welfare. In the context of taxes, one may gladly pay one's last dime for defense; one may not gladly pay a nickel for Defense.

With needed social programs facing billions of dollars of cuts to pay for Defense, Congress might at least give the Pentagon a new, value-free name, such as "Department of the Military," "Department of the Armed Forces," or "Department of the Armed Services."

Might a change in Pentagon nomenclature make a useful difference? At the very least, it would be reflected instantly in countless official speeches, news stories, magazine articles, editorials and columns. In doing so, it would dilute the subliminal pro-Pentagon bias that comes into play whenever the word "defense" modifies "budget," "spending," "appropriations," or "outlays."

The common substitution of "military" as the modifier could only have a wholesome effect on public dialogue. Perhaps we would stop seeing confused quotes such as this recent one from a Colorado congressman: "People are really outraged by big defense expenditures." What outraged them, I suspect, was big military outlays, the need for some of which they sensibly doubted.

As things stand, a congressional or presidential candidate who blesses any of the many wasteful weapons systems is certain to win praise for being "strong on defense" and a stand-tall patriot. Anyone challenging a worse-than-useless weapon system is all but certain to be pilloried as "weak on defense"—and maybe in head and heart as well.

A Pentagon name change is but one of many seldom-discussed ideas to curb Pentagon profligacy. Some were urged by Gordon W.

Morton Mintz is a reporter for The Washington Post.

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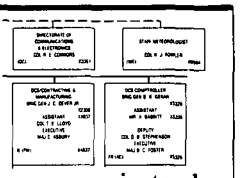
Stealth bomber is likewise being produced by Northrop and other contractors outside the official system, under a similar arrangement that bypasses all the bureaucratic layers until the very top.

Engine envy

The same corruption of purpose is manifest in the Navy and Army counterparts of the Air Force Systems Command. Between 10 and 15 percent of all mid-rank officers are so employed, with the highest percentage in the Air Force and the lowest in the Navy.

Each of these overelaborate organizations shows the same preference for overelaborate weapons. In the Army the tendency to pursue technological advancement for its own sake is most prominent, as with the gas-turbine engine of the M-1 tank. The M-1's engine is very advanced and very desirable in every way—except in combat. This bit of technological ambition endangered the entire M-1 program, and the fact that the risk was taken is proof of the sheer bureaucratic power of the research-and-development crowd. In the Navy, the overdoing of everything is plainly manifest in the sheer size of the ships. While constantly complaining about



By Morton Mintz

Rule, an iconoclastic Navy cost-cutter who died in 1982 after waging a relentless 20-year battle against waste and unaccountability in weapons-buying:

- Congress should require an oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth from any Pentagon official who—orally or in writing—justifies a major program, estimates its cost, or reports the preproduction status of the design. Fear of possible prosecution aside, there is in this idea an appeal to the bedrock personal honor that bars brazen perjury before the elected representatives of the American people.
- Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger should stop the hounding and punishing—and start the heeding and honoring—of his embattled in-house truth-tellers. One, Franklin (Chuck) Spinney, has demonstrated how the bills for high-technology weapons cannot help but soar out of control because of the military's "systematic tendency to underestimate future costs." In 1983, he estimated that the administration's $1.6 trillion military buildup—$20,000 for the average U.S. household by 1988—would be underfunded by up to 30 percent.
- Congress should restructure procurement by setting up those who buy and test weapons in a new department separate and independent from those who request and use weapons, as is done in France and many other countries. Meanwhile, the military should stop promoting and start court-martialing officers who gravely mismanage weapons programs instead of discouraging and driving out the brave few who try to do their jobs well.

In the seagoing Navy, Gordon Rule noted, accountability is strict; in the "procurement Navy" it is lax. The difference was once neatly distilled into a single sentence by W. Graham Claytor, former secretary of the navy, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee: "Senator, I have said many times there is nothing wrong with our Navy that money won't fix."

- The Pentagon should not order a weapon into production until after the completion of development and realistic testing, because to abandon the "fly-before-buy" principle—as often happens—is to adopt what Rule termed "the most fundamental, costly, and wasteful practice in defense procurement."
- Congress should not let military program managers and their civilian secretaries sanitize phony low bids, poor design, and flawed contracts with the term "overly optimistic." Secretary Claytor used that term in the 1970s, when he agreed to pay $639 million extra to General Dynamics for cost overruns in building nuclear attack submarines.

"The term itself should be a red flag to the Congress, but there has been no visible indication to date that they really care," Rule once said. "Can one imagine the reaction to a military commander explaining the failure of a military or naval operation by saying, 'Sorry, we were overly optimistic'?" ■

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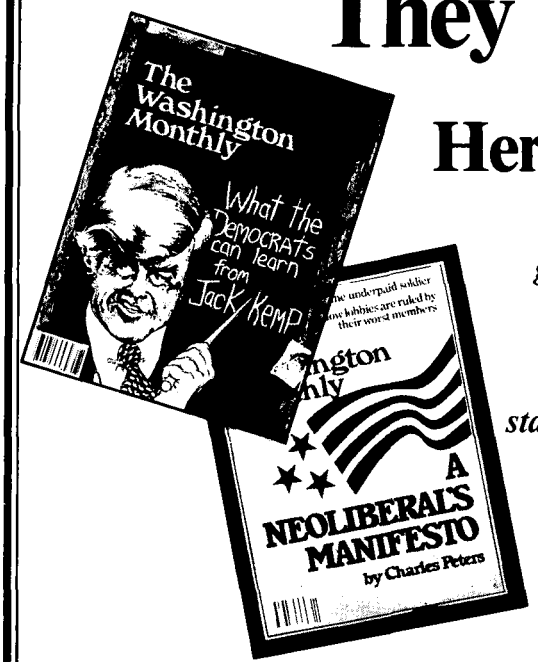

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Soviet numerical superiority, the Navy creates that superiority by designing ships so large that very few can be acquired, even with generous budgets. For example, the 14 deployable carriers of the Navy are simply too few to cover the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Pacific, and the Indian Ocean, but the Sea Systems Command has succesfully blocked all proposals for "small," 50,000-ton carriers.

Each of these chronically underemployed organizations shows the same tendency to suppress military innovation by keeping new weapons on the research merry-go-round. When a weapon is actually new in *concept*, when there is therefore no "user community" already in place to press for early production, innovation is greatly delayed. But things are even worse when the new equipment threatens to reduce the role of well-established user groups.

That has been the fate of "remotely piloted vehicles." These mini-aircraft can already substitute advantageously for piloted craft used in reconnaissance and easily could be developed to serve as strike aircraft as well. The Navy Air Systems Command has been researching unmanned aircraft for decades, but none was sufficiently perfect to be put into production, according to the pilots in charge. Such decisions have tangible results: During the Lebanon fighting of 1983-84, the colossal firepower of the reactivated battleship *New Jersey* largely was wasted when it bombarded Druze and Syrian positions, because its guns were fired on map coordinates without concurrent target-finding or correction. For fear of losing men, American commanders only rarely sent spotters with binoculars and radios into the hills beyond Beirut. This would have been the perfect job for the remotely piloted vehicle. But the mini-aircraft will never be produced if pilot-dominated bureaucracies continue to control their development. The rejection of "not-invented here" equipment is one more consequence of grossly overmanned bureaucracies that are fiercely determined to keep for themselves whatever work is to be had. Weapons developed by other services will be accepted only under the strongest possible pressure from Pentagon high officials and Congress. Even then the potential economies are usually lost because each service insists on major modifications. For example, when the Air Force was compelled in the early 1960s to accept the Navy's A-7 attack jet, it eventually gave in. Then its systems command insisted on "customizing" the aircraft, doubling its cost and reducing commonality with the Navy's A-7s to a mere 40 percent.

Cheat if necessary

Insult is added to injury when civilian defense officials try to compel the services to evaulate foreign alternatives to their chosen designs. The same systems-command people who would be put out of business if the foreign products were chosen are given the task of testing those products, and they know what to do, with results sometimes downright farcical. For example, when the Army was asked to choose a ready-made 9mm automatic pistol to replace the vintage 1911 .45-caliber, a buffalo-killer of inordinate weight and minimal accuracy, researchers tested the Italian Beretta 925B, the German P7A13, the Swiss P226, and the American Smith & Wesson 459M. All candidates were rejected after tests conducted in 1981-82. None, it turned out, was sufficiently "reliable." That result was obtained easily enough: to pass the test, each pistol had to fire 800 rounds at a stretch. But the pistol is no more than an occasional self-defense weapon; statistics show that very few pistols are ever fired in earnest. Fifty rounds might be fired at a stretch, once or twice during a long war; 800 is an inconceivable number.

But extreme and fanciful requirements are not the end of the story. When a weapon must be rejected, sheer cheating is not uncommon. Earlier, when the Air Force (which has no pistol-design community) tested the same pistols, the Beretta averaged 2,000 rounds without a malfunction in a 40,000-round reliability test. Similarly, after the comparative evaluation of the M-1 and Leopard II tanks, the Germans complained that certain malfunctions noted during the tests had been contrived by the evaluators. The damage thus inflicted to Alliance relations is very serious. After so many disappointments, American offers of "two-way street" purchasing are met with well-justified cynicism.

Each of the Pentagon's major systems commands has enough middle-ranking staff to supervise the acquisition of *all possible* weapons—not only for all four services but for every armed force of the world, including that of the Soviet Union. Not one of the systems commands is capable of doing its assigned work speedily and economically. They are the ultimate case of too many cooks in one kitchen—or rather, of kitchens greatly enlarged to accommodate more cooks around fewer pots. ■

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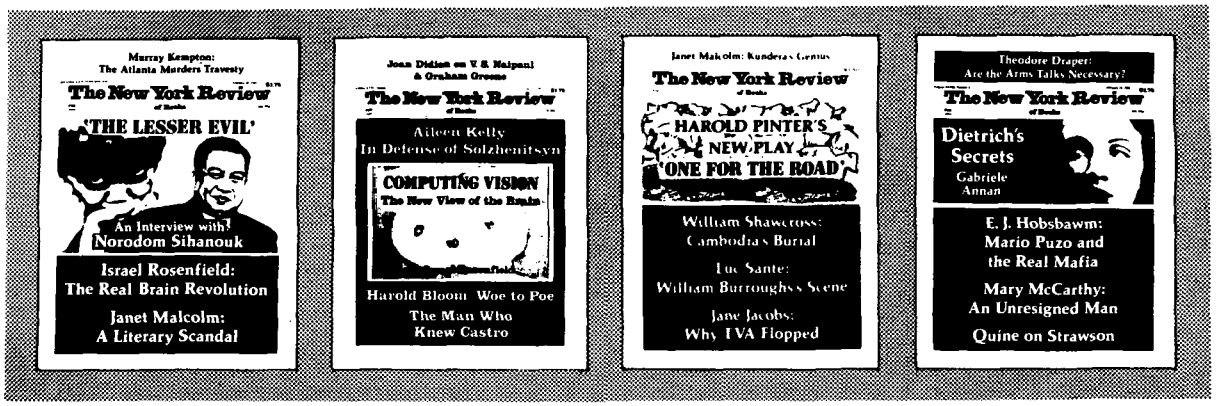

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Splitting the Difference: I Negotiated Contracts for the United States Navy

By Jamie Beckett

As investigations on defense procurement continue, the grim tales—the $600 toilet seat, the $7,600 coffeemaker, the contract delays, the cost overruns— have become almost commonplace. But they still horrify me because I spent two-and-a-half years inside a defense department contracting office, and I *know*: the contracting process is a mess.

A congressional committee hasn't called me to testify, but I have a story of my own. I held up the repair and overhaul of two Navy ships for more than two months while working as a contracting intern at the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA). I simply hid a contract for several $9,000 valves in my desk drawer because I didn't understand it.

I only did that once. No one seemed too upset by it, because they knew what I had yet to realize: the purchase of military equipment is regularly and routinely mired in the sludge of bureaucratic incompetence and excessive regulation.

I was a neophyte when I entered the Navy's contracting intern program in May 1980. After graduating from college with a degree in journalism, I had received a splashy brochure with color photographs of ships and submarines and a letter inviting me to become a Navy contracting intern.

The intern program is designed to bring eager, young college graduates into the civil service and turn them into crackerjack negotiators. It sounded exciting. I pictured myself in tense discussions with hard-nosed defense contractors. I imagined the sharp, experienced Navy negotiators guiding me through this complex and vitally important business. I even prided myself on the small role I would play in bolstering the nation's defenses.

Two months after I "came on board"—knowing nothing about business, accounting, or negotiations—I was assigned a $6 million contract for radar systems on Terrier-class ships. I had never seen a Navy ship, let alone a Terrier-class ship. All I knew about defense procurement came from a month in the office and a month-long course on the Defense Acquisition Regulations, which fill four or five fat loose-leaf binders.

I was asssured I'd get plenty of help on the contract, but my boss had a habit of nodding off in the afternoon, sometimes while he was answering one of my questions. One of his favorite expressions was: "It's close enough for government work."

The Navy doesn't shop for bargains, but the contracting system is designed to be fair. The bulky Federal Acquisitions Regulations (which replaced the Defense Acquisition Regulations) govern every step of the process, from the definition of "contract" to bid-opening procedures to justifications for a noncompetitive buy.

The contracts personnel are for the most part honest, regular folk. Those who have never worked for the government might imagine offices of lazy civil servants who spend two-hour lunches in bars. There are those, of course. One senior negotiator I knew was so notorious for his ad-

Jamie Beckett is a reporter at the Norwich, Connecticut Bulletin.

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My boss had a habit of nodding off while he was answering my question. One of his favorite expressions was, 'It's close enough for government work.'

diction to video games that his secretary would fetch him in the arcade when she needed him in the office. But there were also people like my second boss, who arrived each morning at 5:45, an hour and 15 minutes before he was due in, and my first boss, who arrived promptly at 7 a.m. and often worked long past 5 p.m.

So why does it take so long—six months to a year—to award a major contract?

The neatest folder

The Naval Sea Systems Command is the largest single contracting activity in the federal government. According to Navy Public Affairs, the command spent $14.8 billion in fiscal year 1984. NAVSEA is part of a gargantuan office-apartment complex called Crystal City, workday home to more than 20,000 Navy employees and hundreds more who work for the contractors and companies that do business with the Navy. The 12-story building I worked in stands in the center of a trio of cream-colored concrete office buildings. The contracts department is on the fifth floor. It is about a 10-minute walk from the Crystal City Metro station, through underground passageways, past the Safeway, through a parking garage, across the street, then through a mini-mall of arcades and fast-food eateries, into a winding corridor, past the credit union, to the elevator.

The twisted route was a little bit like the contracting process, which involves so many steps and so many people that even if everyone involved is highly competent, it cannot help but drag out over many months.

I awoke in darkness on the first morning I was to report to NAVSEA and suited up in Navy-inspired blue and white. My boss, a retired Navy pilot, greeted me at the office door, wearing a huge grin and a starched white shirt that I came to know as his uniform. I spent the first few days there cooped up in his tiny office, reading the regulations, and drinking double-strength coffee that he insisted I take black.

Many regulations have nothing to do with contracts but are instead congressional attempts at socio-economic equity. There are regulations favoring minority businesses, women-owned businesses, small businesses, and areas with high unemployment. After a month of reading regulations, I developed a taste for that double-strength coffee. In June they sent me to school in Petersburg, Virginia to read more regulations.

When I returned, a slim green folder called a purchase request (PR) was waiting for me. The months of congressional wrangling and presidential edicts that become the defense budget eventually wind up as purchase requests for valves, air conditioners, or, in this case, a $6 million radar system. The PR contains an engineer's description of the item, an estimated price, and, in the case of most NAVSEA contracts, the name of the sole-source contractor. This same contractor often writes the specifications and helps the Navy prepare the PR.

A competitive contract is relatively simple to execute. The purchase is advertised. Unless there are complications, award goes to the lowest bidder. Noncompetitive contracts, generally worth more, involve many more steps. First, the use of a sole-source contractor must be justified. That may sound difficult, but it isn't. Generally the wording is: "This contractor is the only one with the requisite knowledge and experience to perform the contract. To go to any other contractor would cause a delay in the program of X months and an additional cost of Y."

I wrote these words, and my request to seek a contract with Sperry Corp. on Long Island was approved. The next step was the Request for Proposal, a document that provides the contractor

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with specifications and required delivery dates. Of course Sperry knew about the impending request long before I did, so this step was a mere formality.

Charlie and Bonnie, Sperry's contracts people, delivered the proposal in July. It was a thick, slick document filled with numbers and headings like "shop equipment" and "engineering labor." However intimidating it may have seemed, this proposal was puny compared to those for larger deals, which were many volumes long and were often delivered in huge cardboard boxes. When a proposal is that voluminous, it is easy to hide things like a $3,000 wrench, for instance, in a heading called "tools," or a $7,000 coffeepot in a heading called "shop equipment."

If Sperry had done that, I would have had no way of knowing. Negotiators seldom have the time or technical expertise to dissect a proposal. Evaluations are generally based on past prices for the same or similar items. If the Navy paid $10,000 for "tools" last year and $8,500 two years before, then the $11,000 proposed this year does not seem unreasonable. The goal of this type of reasoning, often repeated at NAVSEA, was "cover your ass."

I sent Sperry's proposal to an engineer for a technical review and to an auditor for a pricing review. Many months passed. Meanwhile, my boss showed me how to make the pages stay neat in the purchase request folder. We punched three holes in each page, then we put reinforcements on each hole to make sure the page stayed straight. It worked and the folder was neater than that of any other negotiator, for the time being.

The audit report was due in September, but the deadline was pushed back to November. In July, my boss and I went to St. Petersburg, Florida to visit another contractor, who treated us to a lobster dinner and key lime pie. We spent one afternoon sunning on a government auditor's boat, and I tried my hand at waterskiing. In November, we took another trip, to visit the Sperry plant in Long Island for a contract review.

When we returned, the audit report had arrived, and I began to write my contract clearance. The clearance explains the negotiator's position, based on his own cost and price analysis, the auditor's analysis, and the engineer's comments on the product. My boss came in handy here. He was an expert at filling out those 11 x 14-inch sheets of graph paper, writing numbers in neat columns for comparison.

The key to choosing a negotiating position is to make sure the "negotiator's price" is close to the figure you and the contractor are likely to settle on. That will guarantee approval of your post-negotiation clearance. What price will you settle on? Split the difference between the auditor's position and the contractor's proposal. There you go.

If only I had known the old "split the difference" trick I wouldn't have spent all those months worrying about that $6 million purchase request (which, incidentally, ended up as an $8 million contract).

Checkers and doers

The regulations require that the clearance and every other document carry the signature, or "chop," of numerous authorities. The bigger the deal, the more authorities. A $25 million contract clearance, for instance, must be signed by the branch head, the division director, the chief of the contracts group, someone from the "contract clearance group" in the Naval Material Command (which oversees NAVSEA), and the head of that contract clearance group.

A clearance like that is seldom approved on the first try. Two months or more may pass before the document drifts back to the negotiator's desk. The negotiator answers everyone's questions, rewrites the clearance and sends it back through the chain.

One contracting officer still at the Navy describes the clearance approval process this way: "So you have one guy write it who knows a lot about the deal. Then you have one guy review it who knows something about it. Then you have four guys review it who know nothing about it."

Retired Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, whose criticism often nettles the Navy, lodged a similar complaint in a November 1984 essay in the *American Legion Magazine*: "A major problem in the Defense Department is that those at the top are too far removed from those who know the facts and do the work. . . . As these phenomena cascade down the organizational chart, the 'checkers' eventually outnumber the 'doers.' The extra layers of management delay work, waste time, and dilute responsibility."

My measly $6 million contract clearance needed only two "chops," but I spent nearly four months writing it and waiting for approval. Negotiations were much simpler. Charlie and Bonnie flew in from Long Island. With much ado, we gathered in a conference room at the end of the hallway. I had a list of questions prepared, and we bantered back and forth for a few days.

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It was exciting. I remember rushing through lunch breaks, telling anyone who would listen I was "in negotiations."

At the end, we never agreed on those line item costs I had questioned. We settled on a bottom-line figure that was—guess where—midway between their proposal and my pre-negotiation position.

The post-negotiation clearance was approved with little fuss, but contract award was still many weeks away. The contract disappeared down the dim corridors for awhile, as the document was prepared and the "fiscal" office attached the funds to it. Funding may take a week, two weeks, or more. There are five types of "money," which vary according to the type of contract—research and development money, for instance, funds research and development contracts. Many contracts are funded by more than one source and must circulate through several fiscal offices, spending a week to two weeks in each.

The process would work better, one contracting officer told me recently, if the fiscal folks would use Monopoly money instead of their sophisticated computers, which are constantly breaking down. They would put the Monopoly money in shoeboxes at the beginning of the year, then count it out as contracts are awarded.

The negotiator's job is to shepherd the contract through the system as quickly as possible, a difficult task even for the most diligent worker. Unfortunately, there are a lot of negotiators who are not diligent. They are, as I have indicated, a minority, but there are enough of them to constitute a substantial problem. One afternoon a coworker told the office gang, through spasms of giggles, how she had responded to a contractor who had just telephoned. The contractor had called to find out why she hadn't finished some work.

Everyone laughed when she told how she put off the caller.

"It's up in Fiscal," she said. "It's out of my hands." In fact, everyone knew that the delay was her own fault, but nothing was done.

Easy money

The civil service system, I feel, is largely to blame for workers' ineptness and for a lackadaisical attitude regarding the work at hand. Nobody gets fired, they just get moved from office to office. My female colleague who was so adept at putting off contractors, for instance, is now working on a top-secret project.

Another fellow, too old to do much work, was appointed "civil defense coordinator." From what I hear, he is still wandering the hallways in a yellow hard-hat, explaining building escape procedures.

Although there has been much fuss in the past couple of years about merit pay, the fact is that most workers get raises every year if their performance is judged satisfactory. Those raises, called step increases, come on top of the yearly cost-of-living increases approved by Congress.

The contracting intern program is even easier on its charges. To lure young graduates, the program promises interns a starting salary of $17,824 and a grade increase—that's about a $4,000 raise—each year for three years.

We awarded the radar systems contract to Sperry in March 1981. In May I went back to school for a three-week refresher course on the regulations. I returned to a new office and a new boss, my second rotation in the three-year training program. I also received a promotion and a $3,000 raise. A few months later I stashed the contract for the $9,000 valves in my desk drawer.

A passable performance is all that is needed to get such hefty raises. This is the performance report that boosted me from a GS-7 to a GS-9:

"During this reporting period, Ms. Beckett has continued to peform in a satisfactory manner. Because of her sound judgment, Jamie was assigned the Terrier FY81 ship overhaul program, which required an unusual [sic] quick turnaround. Jamie responded extremely well and the contract was awarded 11 March 1981. Jamie has the potential to do GS-9 level work."

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It was too easy. Yet, at the same time, the work is boring and tedious. Forms pile upon forms. It is tempting to forget amid the mass of paper that you are dealing with the taxpayers' money that is to go toward items vital to the national defense. It frightens me a little when I think about some of the people charged with that responsibility.

Many don't want to be there. You can see it in their pale, drawn faces; their sleepy, half-closed eyes; their rumpled clothing; their retirement countdown calendars. You can hear it in bathroom conversations and in the nearby bars, which are crowded at lunchtime and after work. You can hear it in the bleep of the video games employees sneak out to play, in the sound of the coffee cups being filled from the 32-cup dispenser, in the whispered telephone conversations, hopes of escape.

One highlight of our mole-like existence—hardly anyone has an office with windows—was the biweekly training session. The sessions were rarely educational, but they were a break from the tedium and a chance to socialize.

We were supposed to take notes, but most only pretended to do so. One day a Navy lieutenant got nailed.

"Who's taking notes for you, lieutenant?" the commodore asked.

"I am, sir," the lieutenant replied, and held up his pen.

When he did, several of us began to snicker.

"Take the top off it," the commodore said, "then maybe you can take some notes."

Knowing the numbers

Some things have improved since I left the Navy. Contracting interns must now have some business background or they must study accounting soon after they enter the program. Branch heads now use computers to track contracts. Secretaries now have word processors to make changes in the oft-rewritten contract clearances. The fiscal office has speeded its operations somewhat. Most important, more contracts are going out to bid, which generally ensures fairer prices and faster awards.

More needs to be done. For one thing, contracting personnel must receive much better training. It's not enough to know cost and price analysis and to be familiar with the Federal Acquisitions Regulations. The people who spend those billions of dollars in the defense budget must thoroughly understand the products they are buying. That's not the case today. ■

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

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Martin Tolchin
The New York Times

In a two-part series on the takeover of public hospitals by private, for-profit chains, Tolchin looks behind the hoopla over recent surgical breakthroughs and finds a darker side to privatization.

The series explains how chains such as Humana of Louisville, sponsor of landmark artificial heart transplants, have stepped in to revive deteriorating public hospitals on the verge of closing. The chains boast of increased productivity achieved with smaller staffs and cutting-edge technology. But Tolchin demonstrates that private enterprise alone will not ensure decent medical service for those who can't foot the bill. Humana, for example, has been investigated by the Kentucky attorney general because of allegations that it mistreated indigent patients in one of its recently purchased hospitals. When asked about providing free care to the poor, an executive of another successful chain is quoted as responding, "Why don't department stores put up signs inviting shoplifters to shoplift more?"

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations from any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station are welcome. The subject can be government in the federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for articles published in March will be announced in the June issue. Nominations will close April 15. Nominations should be accompanied by two copies of the article or articles.

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How They Write the SAT

By David Owen

Standardized multiple-choice tests, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test, are more than hurdles on the way to college. The tests have become a pervasive measure of worthiness in our society—even a status symbol, as in, "*My* boy scored double 700s."

The Educational Testing Service, which produces the SAT, encourages this attitude. The company's literature conjures up the image of a testing instrument endowed with the learning and precision of white-coated physicists measuring a rocket's lift-off power. But as should be apparent to anyone who has taken these tests, the white-coated image is just that. Many of the test questions are ambiguous, arbitrary, and downright silly.

The principal difference between the SAT and a test that cannot be graded by machine is that the SAT leaves no room for more than one correct answer. It leaves no room, in other words, for people who don't see eye-to-eye with ETS. Understanding how the test-makers think is one of the keys both to doing well on ETS tests and to penetrating the mystique in which the company cloaks its work. Despite ETS's claims to the contrary, its tests are written by people who tend to think in certain predictable ways. The easiest way to see this is to look at the tests themselves.

David Owen is a New York writer. This article is adapted from his book, None of the Above: Behind the Myth of Scholastic Aptitude, *to be published in May by Houghton Mifflin.* *© 1985 by David Owen.*

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Which test doesn't really matter. Here's an item from a recent Achievement Test in French:

2. Un client est assis dans un restaurant chic. Le garcon maladroit lui renverse le potage sur les genoux. Le client s'exclame:
(A) Vous ne pourriez pas faire attention, non?
(B) La soupe est delicieuse!
(C) Quel beau service de table!
(D) Je voudrais une cuillere!

My French is vestigial at best. But with the help of my wife I made this out as follows:

2. A customer is seated in a fancy restaurant. The clumsy waiter spills soup in his lap. The customer exclaims:
(A) You could not pay attention, no?
(B) The soup is delicious!
(C) What good service!
(D) I would like a spoon!

Now, (B), (C), and (D) strike me as nice, funny, sarcastic responses that come very close to being the sort of remark I would make in the situation described. A spoon, waiter, for the soup in my lap! But, of course, in taking a test like this, the student has to suppress his sometimes powerful urge to respond according to his own sense of what is right. He has to remember that the "best" answer—which is what ETS always asks for, even on math and science tests—isn't necessarily a good answer, or even a correct one. He has to realize that the ETS answer will be something drab, humorless, and plodding—something very like (A), as indeed it is. Thus bright students sometimes have trouble on ETS tests, because they see possibilities that ETS's question-writers missed. The advice traditionally given to such students is to take the test quickly and without thinking too hard.

Medicine freaks

Exactly how does ETS come to write questions like this? ETS is very secretive about its methods. The company has always insisted that its work is too complex and too important to accommodate the scrutiny of outsiders. But with some determined digging around, even an outsider can get an idea of what goes on inside ETS's test development office.

A variety of people write questions for the SAT: company employees, freelancers, even student interns. An "assembler" oversees the process, and once the test is completed, this person gives it to two or three colleagues for a review. ETS's test reviews aren't meant to be seen by the public. The words SECURE and E.T.S. CONFIDENTIAL are stamped in red ink at the top of every page. But I obtained a copy of the review materials for the SAT administered in May 1982, which were used as evidence in a court case.

An ETS test review doesn't take long. The reviewer simply answers each item, marking his choices on ordinary lined paper and handwriting comments on items he feels need improvement. For example, the fourth item in the first section was an antonym problem; students were supposed to select the lettered choice that is the nearest opposite in meaning to the word in capital letters:

4. BYPASS: (A) enlarge
(B) advance (C) copy
(D) throw away (E) go through

The first reviewer, identified only as "JW," suggested substituting the word "clog" for one of the incorrect choices (called "distractors" in testing jargon), because "perhaps clog would tempt the medicine freaks." In other words, if the item were worded a little differently, more future physicians might be tempted to answer it incorrectly. The assembler, Ed Curley, decided not to follow JW's suggestions, but the comment is revealing of the level at which ETS analyzes its tests.

In ETS test reviews, the emphasis is not always on whether keyed answers are good or absolutely correct, but on whether they can be defended in the event that someone later complains. When the second test reviewer, Pamela Cruise, wondered whether answering one difficult item required "outside knowledge," Ed Curley responded: "We must draw the line somewhere but I gave item to Sandy; she could not key—none of the terms were familiar to her. She feels that if sentence is from a legit source, we could defend."

"The legitimate source" tends to be either the American Heritage or Webster's dictionary, depending on which supports the answer ETS has selected. In reviewing item 44, JW wrote, "Looked fine to me but AH Dict. would suggest that *matriarchy* is a social system & *matriarchate* a state (& a gov't system). Check Webster." Curley did this and responded, "1st meaning of 'matriarchy' in Webs. is 'matriarchate' so item is fine." To a criticism of another item he responded, "I had some pause over this, too, but tight by dictionary."

I'd always thought that ETS item-writers must depend heavily on dictionaries. The diction in SAT questions is sometimes slightly off in a way that suggests the item writers are testing words

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ETS 'assemblers' don't like to be challenged on their test questions. 'Poop on you,' one responded to an in-house reviewer.

they don't actually use. ("It ain't often you see CONVOKE!" noted JW of a word tested in one item.) SAT items also often test the third, fourth, or fifth meanings of otherwise common words, which can create confusion. In the following item from the same test, the word "decline" is used peculiarly:

17. He is an unbeliever, but he is broad-minded enough to decline the mysteries of religion without ---- them.

(A) denouncing (B) understanding (C) praising
(D) doubting (E) studying

My *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* gives the fourth meaning of decline as "to refuse to accept." This is more or less what ETS wants to say. But the dictionary goes on to explain that decline in this sense "implies courteous refusal esp. of offers and invitations." This usage, and not ETS's, is the proper one. What ETS really wants here is a word like "reject." Cruise made a similar comment in her review, but the item was not changed ("Sounds fine to me and is supported by dictionary," wrote Curley).

Tough enuf

The most important statistic that ETS derives from pretests in terms of building new SATs, is called "delta." Like virtually all ETS statistics, delta sounds more sophisticated than it is. It's really just a fancy way of expressing the percentage of students who consider a particular item but either omit it or get it wrong. (Or, as ETS inimitably describes it, delta "is the normal deviate of the point above which lies the proportion of the area under the curve equal to the proportion of correct responses to the item.") For all practical purposes, the SAT delta scale runs from about 5.0 to about 19.0. An item that very few students get right might have a delta of 16.8; one that many get right might have a delta of 6.3.

ETS calls delta a measure of "difficulty," but this definition is circular. A question is hard if few people answer it correctly, easy if many do. But since delta refers to no standard beyond the item itself, it makes no distinction between one body of subject matter and another. Nor does it distinguish between knowledge and good luck. Delta can say only that a question was answered correctly by the exact percentage of people who answered it correctly. It takes a simple piece of known information and restates it in a way that makes it seem pregnant with new significance.

ETS is almost always reluctant to change the wording of test items, or even the order of distractors, because small changes can make big differences in statistics. Substituting "reject" for "decline" in the above could have made the item easier to answer, thus lowering its delta and throwing off the test specifications. (ETS doesn't pursue the implications. If correcting the wording of a question changes the way it performs on the test, then some of the people now getting it wrong—or right, as the case may be—are doing so *only because* the question is badly written.)

Making even a slight alteration in an item can necessitate a new pretest (or trial run in ungraded portions of existing tests), which is expensive. Revisions are made only grudgingly, even if assembler and reviewer agree that something is wrong. "Key a bit off, but okay," Cruise wrote in regard to one item. JW commented on another: "At pretest I would have urged another compound word or unusual distractor. However it's tough enuf as is."

Test assemblers don't like being criticized by test reviewers. When Cruise described item 26 as a "weak question—trivial," Curley responded in the margin "Poop on you!" The question stayed in the test. Curley's most frequent remark is a mildly petulant "but OK as is," which is scribbled after most criticisms. Assemblers invest a great deal of ego in their tests, and they don't like to be challenged. Sometimes the reviewer is nearly apologetic. "Strictly speaking (too strictly prob-

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ably), doesn't the phoenix symbolize death and rebirth rather than immortality? Item's OK, really. It needs Scotch tape." JW concluded this comment by drawing a little smiling face. (The item was not changed.)

The phoenix item, an analogy problem, also drew a comment from Cruise. "Well—item OK—but this reminds me of the kind of thing we used to test but don't do much now—relates to outside knowledge—myth, lit., etc. . . .This might be an item the critics pick on." In ETS analogies, students are given a pair of words and asked to select another pair "that *best* expresses a relationship similar to that expressed in the original pair." The item:

42. PHOENIX:IMMORTALITY::
    (A) unicorn:cowardice
    (B) sphinx:mystery
    (C) salamander:speed
    (D) ogre:wisdom
    (E) chimera:stability

Cruise said she would "be more inclined to defend this item if it were a delta 15." The item had been rated somewhat lower (i.e. "easier"), at delta 13.2. What Cruise *thought* she was saying

The Aptitude Zoo

"You will *not* be admitted to the test center without positive ID," say the instructions ETS and the College Board give students when they sign up to take the SAT. Test scores would be meaningless if college admissions officers couldn't be certain they had been obtained under secure conditions.

Yet when I took the SAT at Julia Richman High School in New York in December 1983, no one asked for my identification. Indeed, when I took out my wallet to get my driver's license, the proctor told me to put it away. She told all the students to put their identification away. "I just need to see your ticket," she said.

Our proctor, who was wearing a jaunty scarf made of blue plastic netting, talked to herself as she waited for students to arrive. She said she was going to give us our test booklets ahead of time but asked that we not open them "in case Dennis walks in." Of course, several students opened their booklets immediately.

Shortly after she gave us our booklets, she told us to begin. We would have 30 minutes to complete the first section, she said, starting now. Then, after we had started, she told us to be certain to fill in the identifying information on both sides of the answer sheet and on the back of the test booklet. Students have to provide quite a lot of information and doing so takes a long time. Students are supposed to do it *before* the test begins, with the proctor leading them through every step; those in my room were cheated out of at least a third of the time allowed for the first section of the test. Even students who ignored the proctor and began working on the test were penalized, because she talked continually.

There was no clock in our room, so the proctor periodically marked the time on the blackboard. Her timing was very approximate, according to my watch. She shaved off a few minutes on some sections, added a few minutes on others.

My desk was so covered with graffiti that the ink from the tabletop sometimes rubbed off on my answer sheet. Erasing these marks was difficult. All the desks had been carved and gouged. It was possible to tear an answer sheet simply by marking an answer.

Proctors are explicitly required to give students a five-to-ten minute break at the end of each hour. Our proctor gave us just one break, very late in the test, only because a student complained. Several students continued working during the break. This, of course, is against the rules. It is cheating. The proctor said nothing, although she was clearly able to see what was going on. Other students worked on sections other than the one they were supposed to be working on. This, too, is cheating.

Students who finished the last section early were allowed to leave. This is absolutely forbidden. It is also extremely distracting to the students still working. The students who left early rustled their coats and papers and talked in normal voices. The proctor talked, too. She stood in the doorway and talked to a woman in the hall. I was working on the last few problems in my second math section at the time. Every time the proctor or one of the students started talking, I lost track of what I was doing and had to begin again. When time finally was called, the proctor allowed the remaining students to continue working on the test. Several still were working when I left.

—*D.O.*

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was that if the item had been more "difficult," and thus intended for "abler" students, the ambiguity in it would have been less objectionable. But all she was *really* saying was that she would have been more inclined to defend the item if fewer people had answered it correctly. (Or, to put it another way, she would have thought it less ambiguous if it had been more ambiguous.) This, of course, doesn't make any sense. Cruise had forgotten the real meaning of delta and fallen victim to her own circular logic. ETS's test developers cloak their work in scientific hocus-pocus and end up deceiving not only us but themselves.

Curley didn't share Cruise's peculiar concern. "Think we can defend," he wrote. "Words are in dictionary, they have modern usage, and we test more specialized *science* vocab than this. Aren't we willing to say that knowledge of these terms is related to success in college?"

Actual minorities

Whether the SAT is culturally biased against minorities is a perennial concern at ETS. The company says it has proven statistically that the SAT is fair for all. Just to make sure, for the last few years it has used "an actual member of a minority" (as one ETS employee told me) to read every test before it is published. According to an ETS flier, "Each test is reviewed to ensure that the questions reflect the multicultural nature of our society and that appropriate, positive references are made to minorities and women. Each test item is reviewed to ensure that any word, phrase, or description that may be regarded as biased, sexist, or racist is removed."

But the actual "sensitivity review" process is much more cursory and superficial than this description implies. The minority reviewer, a company employee, simply counts the number of items that refer to each of five "population subgroups" and enters these numbers on a Test Sensitivity Review Report Form.

On the verbal SAT administered in May 1982, minority member Beverly Whittington found seven items that mentioned women, one that mentioned black Americans, two that mentioned Hispanic Americans, none that mentioned native Americans, four that mentioned Asian Americans (actually, she was stretching here; these particular Asian Americans were Shang Dynasty Chinese, 1766—1122 B.C.). Two items overlapped, so Whittington put a "12" in the box for Total Representational Items. She also commented "OK" on the exam's text specifications, "OK" on the subgroup reference items, and "OK" on item review. She made no other remarks. If she had found the word *nigger* in one of the questions, presumably she would have scratched it out. ETS made Whittington take a three-day training program in "test sensitivity" before permitting her to do all of this. When her report was finished, it was stamped E.T.S. CONFIDENTIAL and SECURE. Then it was filed and forgotten.

Noun schmoun

After its sensitivity review, every SAT is passed along to what the College Board (which hires ETS to write and administer its college admissions tests) describes as a committee of "prominent specialists in educational and psychological measurement." ETS and the board talk publicly about the SAT committee as though it were a sort of psychometric Supreme Court, sitting in thoughtful judgment on every question in the SAT. According to the official mythology, the SAT committee ensures the integrity of the test by subjecting it to rigorous, independent, expert scrutiny. But in fact committee members are largely undistinguished in the measurement field. They have no real power, and ETS generally ignores their suggestions.

"'They always hate to see my comments," says Margaret Fleming, one of the committee's ten members and a deputy superintendent in Cleveland's public school system. "Now, we have had some showdowns about it. Sometimes they change, but I find that item writers are very pompous about their work, and they don't like you to say anything. I am saying something, though, because I feel that maybe 40 people are responsible for writing items, let's say, for the verbal area, and why should 40 people govern by chance what thousands of youngsters' opportunities might be?"

Far fewer than 40 people are involved in writing an SAT, but no matter. I asked her how ETS responded to her criticisms.

"They many times try to dismiss it," she said. "Sometimes they're very stubborn. Now, the one I got back recently was about a word that my dictionary said is a noun. Now I'm using *American Heritage Dictionary*, which I feel is common access across the country. I haven't got the Oxford English unabridged 30-volume thing. All I've got is what most people would have. And I said, the options here are verbs, and it appears that this

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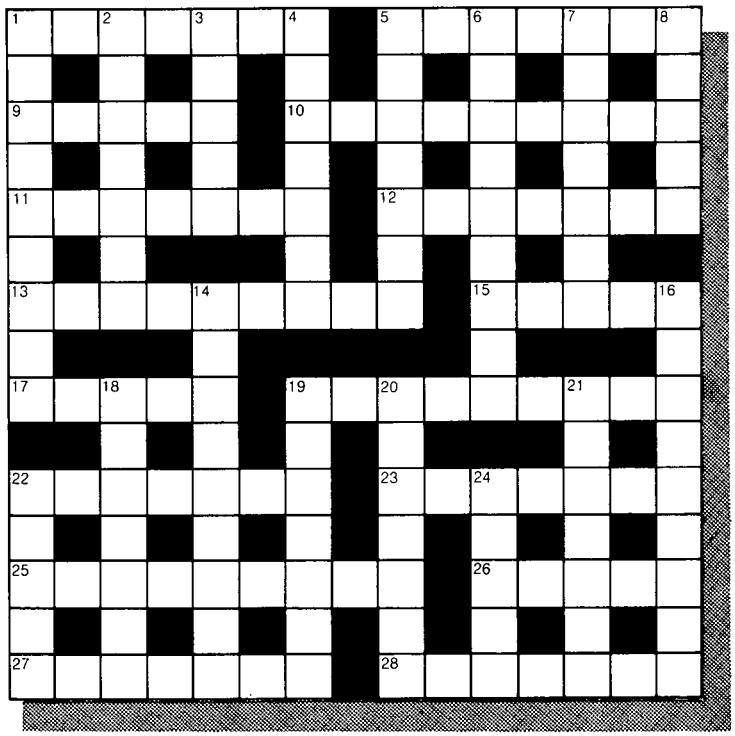
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.



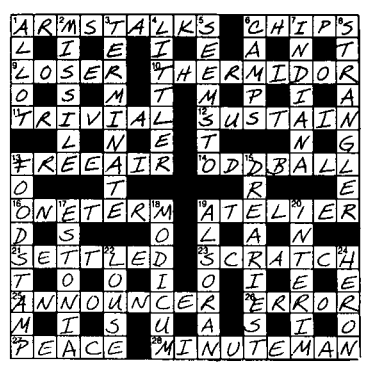
ACROSS

1. Study fast to ratify. (7)
5. Excellence seemed strange for Reagan appointee. (2, 5)
9. Steno transcribed shorthand. (5)
10. Roadside sign erroneously rocks putt. (5, 4)
11. Displayed a recent legislator. (7)
12. Shows up unseemly as paper. (7)
13. Political neutrality is mean thing. (3, 6)
15. Caper on the far side of the Atlantic. (5)
17. Clod puts four in Mrs. Dole's charge. (5)
19. Vessel set up to take Lett East. (9)
22. Crimes seen returning in this Red rumor. (7)
23. No encouragement from messy diapers. (7)
25. Another splintered rift freed. (9)
26. After 50, the bad would be good. (5)
27. New dew role brought down. (7)
28. Major political problem if cited incorrectly. (7)

DOWN

1. Agreed to putting off decent son. (9)
2. Tainter mixed fertilizer component. (7)
3. Stein rediscovered map feature. (5)
4. Thumb up, rode around, and rode around again. (7)
5. Teach in a new way, at deuce. (7)
6. Mediator's assignment from Thackeray? (4, 5)
7. Derive from former publication? (7)
8. Post office sex scandal for Montreal group. (5)
14. Rain around that place, not at the front. (2, 3, 4)
16. Vehicle disturbing the clover. (9)
18. With no eyes, fiery view can produce not much. (4, 3)
19. Kind of tuppence? (2, 5)
20. Duet aid conformed and confirmed. (7)
21. Intercourse if craft is accommodated. (7)
22. For decoration put five hundred in the repast. (5)
24. Assign people to bring Minnesota up before failing grade. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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is the only item with different parts of speech for the stem and the options. And they said, Well, this word is also a verb, and it's tested as such in this item. You see, they are going around my complaint."

I called Hammett Worthington-Smith, an associate professor of English at Albright College in Reading, Pennsylvania and asked him to describe his duties on the SAT committee.

"We review exams," he said, "we prepare questions, we take the tests, and that type of thing."

"You prepare questions in addition to reviewing tests?" I asked.

"Yes, we have that opportunity."

"And do you do that?"

"Yes."

But committee members *don't* write questions for the SAT. Willie M. May, chairman of the committee and assistant principal for personnel and programming at Wendell Phillips High School in Chicago, told me in no uncertain terms that preparing questions was *not* one of his committee's duties. "We are in an advisory capacity," he said. "We don't do any tinkering at all."

When I asked Worthington-Smith what test-reviewing involved, he said, "You know, normally what anyone else would do with this one particular test. Now, I don't want to spend much more time on this, because we do exactly what the College Board statement says, so I don't know what you're out fishing for."

"I'm not fishing for anything," I said.

"Okay, so that's enough for today." And he hung up on me. Our phone conversation had lasted exactly two-and-a-half minutes.

According to the College Board's one-paragraph "Charge to SAT committee," each member reviews, by mail, two tests a year. An ETS answer key is included with each test. I asked committee member William Controvillas, a guidance counselor at Farmington High School in Farmington, Connecticut, what these reviews entailed. "Reviewing involves both verbal as well as the math," he said. "You review the questions to make sure that the question is legible and that there aren't any trick language aspects to it, and that it's clear, and that you come up with the answer that you think should be gotten. You get an answer sheet and some statistics with it. If you happen to be less competent in math, you still review it for language. I tend to be more verbal."

In the course of our conversation, Controvillas used the word "criteria" twice as a singular noun and told me that the committee reviews each test "physically" (he also seemed to be uncertain about the meaning of the word "legible"). In general, he said, he found the SAT impressive. "These are tests, of course, that are made up by professional test-makers, so in a sense what you're doing is applying some kind of quality control. A quality control function."

The SAT committee's *real* duties have more to do with public relations than with test development. Committee members tiptoe through questions and statistics they don't understand, flattered to have been asked to look at them in the first place, and then help spread the good word about ETS. ETS has little interest in their opinions. By the time the committee receives a test, changing it is virtually impossible. "Minor revisions can be made in questions at this stage," says an ETS document, referring to a test-development stage *prior* to the one in which the committee is consulted, "but a major revision in a question makes it necessary to represent the question in order to determine the effect of the changes on the statistical characteristics of a question." Such revisions are almost never made. As soon as committee members have completed their busywork, the test is sent to the printer. ■

Herbert Croly of *The New Republic*

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

We look forward to seeing her again when she graduates

"It was a nice visit. There are no differences. All is resolved," Nancy Reagan said in an official White House statement in early January, after she and the president visited with the president's estranged son Michael and met Michael's 20 month-old daughter for the first time. "Everybody loves each other, and this is a wonderful way to start the New Year."

The message was: "You'll be swimming with the gefilte fish."

Martin Rapaport is a diamond dealer in Manhattan's 47th Street "Diamond District" who began, in 1978, to publish a weekly newsletter listing "consensus" prices on the street. The publication angered the other dealers who claimed it was putting a lid on prices. "Rapaport was called before the court of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and ordered to halt publication," *The Washington Post* reported. "Some weeks, he says, he got as many as 40 bomb threats and menacing phone calls. Police traced several to a matzo bakery in Brooklyn."

He charged $25,000 for the call from Sam Donaldson alone

Ten to fifteen percent of the $578,000 that attorney Leonard Garment charged for defending Ed Meese during the special prosecutor's probe went for "public relations." Garment explained that he handled up to a dozen calls a day from the media.

Now, if we could just get rid of *Brown v. Board of Education*, we'd be over the top.

The Elks Club in Winter Haven, Florida gives free privilege cards to members of the Boston Red Sox in spring training there—except to players like All-Star Jim Rice who are black. "We are strictly a white members club only," a spokeswoman for the club said.

In Washington, William Bradford Reynolds, chief of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, told a congressional committee that the Reagan administration's "remarkable" record on civil rights enforcement "has brought us to the brink of victory" against racial discrimination.

When they see you in your Mercedes, it'll make them feel 20 years younger

A new technique in cosmetic surgery called "Accents" enables doctors to tatoo patients with a permanent eyeliner. The procedure takes half an hour and costs from $800 to $1,200. "The actual cost is nominal, so it's almost all profit," said a physicians' consultant who is marketing the procedure. "I say to doctors, 'How much money do you want to make? If you want to make big bucks, you got to set up an expensive waiting room and charge high fees. People love to pay a lot of money to doctors. The more you charge, the better the patients feel.' "

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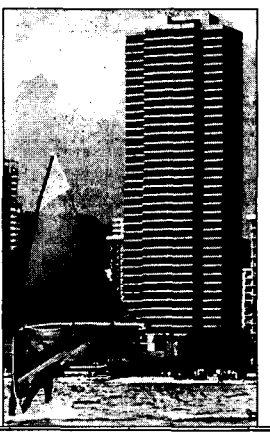

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

"A standard practice that's been in use for many years" is how **President Reagan** dismissed reports that **Michael Deaver**, outgoing White House deputy chief of staff, and several colleagues had used their diplomatic passports to buy nine luxury BMWs at a discount. But **Thomas McGurn**, a BMW spokesman, qualified the president's rendition: while 62,000 diplomatic passport-holders are eligible for the reduced rate, BMW approves only 75 such discounts each year. **Fred Fielding**, White House counsel, found "nothing per se illegal or unethical" about the purchase. Fielding gained his expertise in public morality as deputy to John Dean in the Nixon White House, when he donned white gloves to clean out Howard Hunt's safe as part of the Watergate cover-up. Our informants say that the story would not have leaked were it not for Deaver's lame duck status. He was notorious, while in power, for tracking down and slamming anyone who leaked on him. One suspect for the Deaver leak is Fielding, whose desire, well-known among his colleagues, to be included on White House trips was frequently frustrated by a superior named Michael Deaver....

A key to understanding the inner workings of the White House has been the relationship between Deaver and **Nancy Reagan**. While they were not personally as close as most reporters thought, they did have a firm alliance based on his taking care of her interests with the West Wing crowd while she took care of his with the president. At last report she had not selected his replacement. But don't bet on **Donald Regan**, who replaced **James Baker** as White House chief of staff. Known for his corporate business style and an occasionally testy personality, Regan may rub the First Lady the wrong way. "I don't know if he's been able to carve out a relationship with Nancy Reagan," said a White House advisor quoted recently in *The New York Times*. "He has to find a way to work with her because she is key."... Baker, meanwhile, has added to his new Treasury team **John F. W. Rogers**, former Czar of Perks for the White House. This raises the question of whether a heap of new color televisions and a fleet of shiny limos will soon be arriving at Treasury....

Revelations that the Labor Department has been floundering during Secretary **Raymond J. Donovan**'s extended leave of absence (see below) are just the tip of the iceberg. Numerous other executive agencies and departments are in disarray as many high policy posts go unfilled. This means that key policy decisions will devolve upon **David Stockman**—or his successor at OMB—and upon the White House inner circle, where **Patrick Buchanan**, the hard-right conservative, is rapidly emerging as number-two man to Donald Regan....

In

WHITE HOUSE

Chairman, Council of Economic Advisors—**Beryl W. Sprinkel** has been undersecretary of the treasury for monetary affairs.

Special Assistant to the President for Private Sector Affairs—**Frederick J. Ryan** has been director of presidential appointments and scheduling.

EDUCATION

Undersecretary—**Gary L. Bauer** has been deputy undersecretary for policy and budget.

JUSTICE

Attorney General—**Edwin Meese III** has been counselor to the president.

Deputy Attorney General—**D. Lowell Jensen** has been associate attorney general.

Associate Attorney General—**William Bradford Reynolds** has been assistant attorney general for civil rights.

LABOR

Secretary—**William Brock** has been the U.S. trade representative.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Acting Administrator, General Services Administration—**Dwight A. Ink** has been with the Washington, D.C. management consulting firm of McManis Associates.

Out

WHITE HOUSE

Special Assistant to the President for Private Sector Initiatives—**James K. Coyne** has resigned.

AGRICULTURE

Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services—**Mary C. Jarratt** has resigned.

EDUCATION

Undersecretary—**Gary L. Jones** has resigned.

JUSTICE

Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Tax Division—**B. John Williams** has left to become a partner in the Washington office of Morgan, Lewis and Bockius.

LABOR

Secretary—**Raymond J. Donovan** will stand trial for fraud and larceny charges stemming from his construction business.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

General Counsel, Consumer Product Safety Commission—**Howard Katz** has resigned.

Deputy Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration—**Thomas A. Till** has left to become executive vice-president for industry and government affairs for American Coal Enterprises.

Acting Administrator, General Services Administration—**Ray Kline** has left to become president of the National Academy of Public Administration.

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Breaking With Moscow. Arkady N. Shevchenko. *Knopf, $18.95.* The Soviet government reeks of hypocrisy and corruption. Genuine malice fills the hearts of Kremlin leaders, who to a man seek international Soviet hegemony. It's in their genes, from Lenin to Chernenko, and beyond. Conciliatory overtures to the West, detente—all a ruse in a never-ending propaganda war. Beware.

Or:

Deeply embedded in the minds of some of the most powerful Soviet leaders is a sensible realization that even as adversaries, Moscow and Washington share a common interest in survival. Perceived as hard-liners, pragmatists such as Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko actually took detente seriously. Though brittle with age and belligerent after a period of setbacks at home and abroad, the current ruling elite may soon give way to younger, more flexible leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev. Think positive.

Arkady Shevchenko's memoir of a career in Kremlin corridors of power glides almost imperceptibly from one characterization of Soviet government to the other, and then back again. Detente-niks and "Evil Empire" adherents alike will agree with the author's reflections. Shevchenko flatters your foreign policy acumen—so much so that you begin to suspect he's playing a bit to his American audience's ego.

The highest-ranking Soviet diplomatic defector since World War II, Shevchenko served as a United Nations undersecretary general and as a top aide to Gromyko. Before coming in out of the cold in 1978, Shevchenko worked as a CIA spy for two-and-a-half years as part of the deal that got him asylum here.

American hawks will nod with approval at Shevchenko's bleak Kremlin portraits: Yuri Andropov calmly supervising the brutal suppression of Hungary while he was ambassador to Budapest; Nikita Khrushchev merrily manipulating disarmament negotiations as pure propaganda; Andrei Grechko, former defense minister, actively advocating a massive nuclear attack on China, "once and for all to get rid of the Chinese threat."

Shevchenko sketches men who abhor dissent as a personal, as well as political threat. The constant presence of the KGB, monitoring the actions and thoughts of even the highest-ranking officials, conditions the Soviet elite to fear truth or association with those who speak it. The powerful, like the weak, seek security in orthodox doctrine. Paranoia cements the Kremlin's hostile, aggressive stance abroad and cynical distortion of reality at home. Shevchenko underscores the point dramatically in describing Soviet leaders' refusal to acknowledge the degree of political freedom and economic well-being in the United States. Adhering to the strict Leninist dogma that bourgeois governments uniformly serve monopoly capital, many Kremlin leaders, says Shevchenko, believe a secret national control center actually runs this country behind the facades of the White House and the Capitol.

In contrast to this major theme, Shevchenko presents something of a tribute to his former boss, Gromyko. The durable foreign minister reminisces warmly about the days of Soviet-American cooperation in World War II. He loves American movies and proudly recites the names and biographies of U.S. film stars from the 1940s. More important, says Shevchenko, Gromyko has steadily lobbied against the absolute rejection of cooperative contact with Washington. The resolution of the current transition crisis in the top Kremlin leadership may permit views such as Gromyko's to surface again, as they did in the early 1970s.

Even if Shevchenko does little to clarify the best direction for American policy, his insights into the Kremlin mindset make for lively reading. His cloak-and-dagger adventures as a reluctant spy—microfilm in the hollowed-out razor handle, and all that—give rise to interesting reflections on the difficulty of betraying your homeland even when you vehemently oppose its entrenched power structure.

—*Paul M. Barrett*

Sex and Money: Behind the Scenes with the Big-Time Brokers. John D. Spooner. *Houghton Mifflin, $15.95.* "It is, as I write, springtime in a Republican administration," writes Spooner, a stockbroker in the Boston office of Shearson Lehman/American Express. "Throughout America there is the smell of easy money."

In this very funny, novelistic account of his own experiences, Spooner describes a bull market and a nation, fueled by "greed and fear," where the swindlers are outnumbered only by those eager to be taken. Shameless options traders are finding it easy to fleece trendy investors who "care more about action than they do capital gains." One such trader calls it "selling cheap thrills to people cheated by the sexual revolution."

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A beautiful "mining engineer" stirs highballs with her finger while convincing brokers to buy stock in a dubious defense-related precious metals firm called "Doomsday Materials." One of Spooner's colleagues seduces the divorced daughters of corporate CEOs to gain inside information on imminent mergers and acquisitions. Another broker gets her best stock tips at orgies. Though Spooner generally avoids involving himself in the corruption that surrounds him, his many moments of temptation are charming and his seasoned observations arresting. "Money and sex always draw a crowd," he muses. "How seldom the reaction to either is one of pure joy."

Spooner writes with a knowledge of market strategies and emotions that even the most empathetic journalist or novelist would have trouble matching. The problem is that there is an exaggerated quality to many of his scenes and characters that makes it too easy to dismiss his book as "just a story." That's too bad. The financial markets today are probably a world in which the truth is even stranger than fiction.

—Paul Glastris

Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children. Viviana A. Zelizer. *Basic Books, $18.95.* There's been plenty of discussion lately about today's "working children"—kids who come home to empty houses and lengthy lists ("put the dirty clothes in the washing machine and the frozen roast in the microwave"). Working parents who worry about the loss of childhood pleasures can take some satisfaction from Viviana Zelizer's account of attitudes toward children back in the "good old days."

During much of the 19th century, children were viewed as economic units. When a child was killed by a wreckless automobile driver or a careless employer, the bereaved—assuming they went to court—could expect an award based on lost wages. During one celebrated case, a jury deliberated for 53 hours over the worth of an eight-year-old boy, basing its calculations on a sliding scale of how much he had been costing per week in maintenance versus how much he had been earning. The total "loss" to the victim's parents came to $559.95, and that's what they were awarded.

A sociologist, Zelizer analyzes the "complex interaction between the market and human values." Her book offers many examples of history's throw-away children, stimulating an almost voyeuristic interest in cruelties past. Lest we be smug, however, she also suggests that as a society and as individuals we remain ambivalent.

We want our children to be content and carefree, but it is increasingly expensive to raise them, and perhaps they should do more than sit there looking well fed. Where to draw the line? Milking cows, delivering newspapers, and mowing lawns have long been exceptions to the hallowed child labor laws. Zelizer isn't alone in suspecting that some of the most well-adjusted children are those who make tangible contributions to the household. But should teenagers be expected to take grim, low-paying jobs in shopping malls and fast food outlets as a way to help keep the family above water?

Zelizer also argues that as a society, we are cruelly inconsistent. Visit one of Washington's up-scale neighborhood parks, for example, and you will be bowled over by the proliferation of fawning parents and $100 Aprica strollers—truly, nothing is too good for the yuppie offspring. Only a few miles away from these precious, hothouse environments, other children lead lives of violence and poverty. They are neglected and abused by adults over whom the rest of us exercise no control. Condemned to miserable living conditions and indescribably poor schools, such children must wonder indeed why they ever were born.

—Deborah Baldwin

The Chip: How Two Americans Invented the Microchip and Launched a Revolution. T.R. Reid. *Simon & Schuster, $15.95.* This excellent book by one of *The Washington Post*'s best and most

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productive reporters tells the stories of Jack Kilby of Texas Instruments and Robert Noyce of Fairchild Semiconductor, who, in the late 1950s, more or less simultaneously conceived the miniature integrated circuit, harbinger of the computer revolution.

Reid provides a fair degree of detail on how chips work and how computers think, without ever descending into lingo. He drives home the point that computers are literal minded and extremely stupid. There's a small amount of math, which, if you went to a "relevant" high school and took "Theology in Cinema" as an alternate to algebra, you can skip over.

There is also some insight into the business side of early chip manufacturing. Circumstances under which Kilby and especially Noyce worked were—guess what?—decentralized management, little bureaucracy, and freedom to pursue ideas which the marketing department said were hopeless. The same conditions have nurtured countless successful businesses, but still, years after *In Search of Excellence*, the MBA elite look the other way.

Hovering in the background like clumsy secret agents are the Japanese, eager for ideas to swipe. The Japanese, Reid notes, had institutional problems of their own. MITI, their trade-strategy bureaucracy—revered by proponents of industrial policy as a citadel of cosmic thinking—was predicting that no Americans would buy products with funny names like "Toyota" or "Honda," that there was no market for small sports cars; and was telling Sony to sell cheap low-quality TVs, not prestige models.

—*Gregg Easterbrook*

The Rise and Fall of New York City. Roger Starr. *Basic Books, $17.95.* In 1946, New York City was on top of the world. It was only natural that the newly born United Nations should choose to make its home there. After that, it was all downhill, and by 1975, the city was on the edge of bankruptcy. What went wrong?

Roger Starr's answer to that question occupies most of this book. Prominent among the specific causes he lists is rent control, which is what you would expect from someone known as a pillar of the city's real estate establishment (and now a member of *The New York Times* editorial board). In a more general sense, the city government has been paralyzed by the loss of central power. There is no Robert Moses around today, no one who can impose his vision of the city. Starr thinks we are worse off for his absence.

The deeper problem is that the blacks from the rural South who immigrated to the city from 1910 to 1950 have failed to make it into the main stream as did their predecessors from Europe. Here Starr identifies his real villain: the city's ruling elite, who, he claims, did not impose on poor blacks the standards of acceptable behavior learned by previous immigrants. Suffering from liberal guilt, the wealthy and professional classes have accepted welfare and crime as tolerable ways of life, fostering the growth of a dangerous, expensive underclass.

In developing his argument, Starr attacks the left-leaning well-to-do who once clustered around John V. Lindsay. So urgent is his wrath that you would think those people were still running the city. But of course Lindsay has been out of office for more than a decade, and liberals are getting scarce, even on the West Side. Ed Koch, like Ronald Reagan, has won reelection expounding values closer to Starr's than to those of his enemies. The horse Starr flogs may not be dead, but he surely hasn't won any races lately.

That ultimately is the trouble with Starr's book. He is too busy fighting yesterday's battles to tell us his strategy for tomorrow. He does preach to the city's elite: If New York is to have a future, the elite must find "the strength and will to impose discipline, or to insist that government impose discipline on those it means to help." That's about it. Even in his own area of experience, real estate, Starr has lit-

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tle to offer. Too bad. New York, like the United States, could benefit from the opinions of an articulate conservative who can see past the next election. On the evidence of this book, Roger Starr is not that person.

—David Hapgood

Playing God in the Nursery. Jeff Lyon. *Norton, $18.95.* Your baby is two months premature, born with an open spine. An operation can keep him from dying, but for the rest of what could be a long life, he will be severely mentally retarded, a paraplegic, and in constant pain. What do you do?

More and more parents face this terrifying choice because doctors can now "save" many handicapped babies who have died in the past. But as so often happens, technical prowess has outpaced our ability to use it wisely. In 1982, the Reagan administration created the "Baby Doe" regulation, which forced hospitals to take heroic measures to save every child, regardless of the parents' wishes, the cost, or the quality of life the child could look forward to. Courts declared the law unconstitutional, and the controversy boils on.

Jeff Lyon, a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, concludes that simply because we can save a handicapped baby does not mean we always should. The decision, Lyon argues, should rest with the parents. His discussion of the wrenching problem is compassionate, calm and brutally honest.

Lyon explores the taboo subject of paying for the care of the severely handicapped. Costs often exceed $100,000 for the first few weeks alone; the lifetime bill for institutionalizing a person with Down's syndrome may top $1.5 million. Lyon also profiles several parents who have, in essence, abandoned their own lives and those of healthy children to care for a handicapped child. These parents live in constant fear over who will care for the handicapped child after they die. Lyon also exposes the hypocrisy of right-wingers who demand expensive, heroic operations to save handicapped babies but then vote to eliminate schools, shelters and health programs that could help the disabled lead more comfortable and meaningful lives.

Most important, Lyon looks at the issue from the often-ignored point of view of the child. He argues that some lives are so miserable that the child would be better off dead, and he reveals the delusions we create to avoid making terrible choices.

One example from a 1983 court case about an infant girl who literally had no brain: Right-to-lifers brought in a couple to testify that the girl be kept on a ventilator because their own baby, who suffered from similar misfortune, could smile and respond to a stroke on the cheek. Lyon asks whether such evidence helps in the moments when parents must make life-and-death decisions.

—Tina Rosenberg

Precinct 19. Thomas Larry Adcock. *Doubleday, $19.95.* This collection of vignettes about a police precinct in New York's Upper East Side is a fast-paced but somewhat superficial treatment of police life.

We meet cops like Ed Smith, a product of Vietnam and a broken marriage, who monitors the streets by living with the homeless. Officer Tommy Kennan nearly loses his marriage to infidelity and alcoholism. His pregnant mistress, an auxiliary cop, confronts him and his pregnant wife in an expensive restaurant wearing a sign reading, "I'm the other woman."

The 179 officers of Precinct 19 monitor a neighborhood in which financial barons and dowagers walk the same streets as pistol-wielding junkies, transsexual prostitutes, and world-class con artists. Adcock's cops are called to perform a bewildering array of tasks. They chase after the rapist who carved 26 crucifixes into the skin of a nun. Then they write traffic tickets. They stalk and bust eight transvestite burglars as they break into a lingerie and fur shop. Then they fish dead bodies from the river, smoking cigars to conquer the smell.

Adcock, formerly a police reporter in Detroit and St. Paul, spent a year tagging along with the men and women of the 19th precinct and calls them "the best in the world." At times he seems too admiring, and too reluctant to criticize.

What's missing from this steady stream of adventure is deeper analysis. We learn nothing about police training, police salaries, the politics in and around the police department. Adcock has written an interesting book, but he stopped short of making it a truly informative one.

—Jason DeParle

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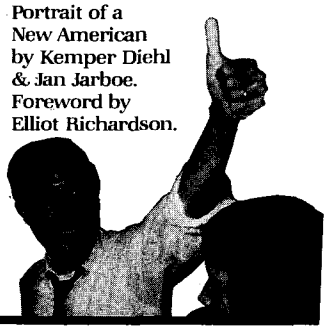

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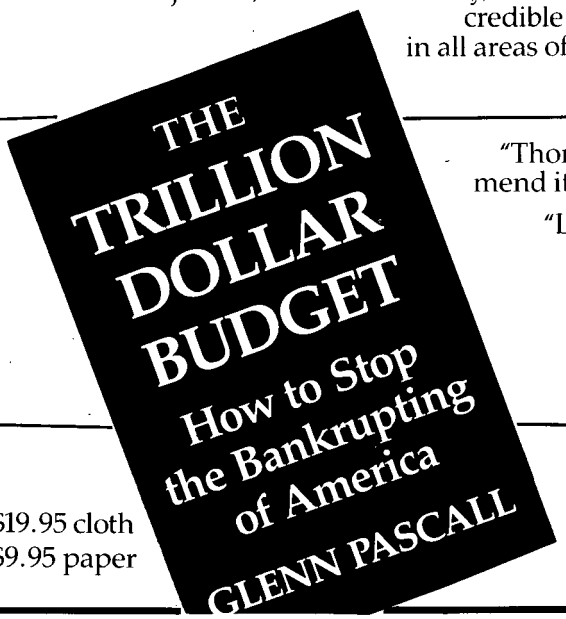

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